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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

ALTHUSSER'S SCIENCE OF EVENTS

by

DAVID J. BAUGH

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF MASTER OF ARTS

IN

DEPARTMENT .....POLITICAL.SCIENCE.....

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL, 1976.

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Althusser's Science of Events"

submitted by David James Baugh

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

.....
Supervisor

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Date 15th January 76

To Virginia Lee Baugh

A B S T R A C T

Louis Althusser has attracted considerable attention by proposing a modernistic 'structuralist' interpretation of Marx. Of the new categories he introduces, the most central and provocative is 'over-determination'. However, the full ramifications of Althusser's approach vis-a-vis certain tenets of classical Marxism, such as the base/super-structure relation, have yet to be fully explored. The thesis shows that, while refocussing attention of the subconscious as a crucial element of history for Marx, Althusser changes its role so that his system points towards totalitarianism, in effect framing the subconscious within whole new conceptions of science and man that are alien to Marx. The issue at stake is whether the subconscious Marx referred to is, as Althusser claims, the domain of Althusser's structural causality, or instead a historical condition of mystification and oppression, to be abolished after capitalism of man's alienation from his species-being. It is argued that Althusser's interpretation must be denied because 1) the newly forged tools of science turn out to be metaphysical rather than scientific and hence not useful; 2) by abandoning Marx's science of history, Althusser has lost Marx's revolutionary insights.

FOREWORD

When the present ruling class was hegemonic, liberal governments offered to their peoples an optimistic view of the future. It was a future anticipated as progressive enlightenment and, in pace, gradual but steady improvement of the standard of living behind the banners of a policy of development and reform. Now we are jolted by the Club of Rome who, in their prestigious and widely circulated The Limits to Growth, claim to have found finite limits to the sort of future we have been cheerfully looking to, limits which we are rapidly approaching. On the other side of this continuous, gradual development they see a decline and possible collapse of civilization.

The task of anticipating the future has recently blossomed into a thriving new demonology. It is nearing the point where it becomes only a question of which horror--energy crisis or food crisis; death of the biosphere or death of the oceans; overpopulation or wastages, greed and corruption; whether nuclear proliferation and holocaust or instead leaks and accidents from the increased reliance on nuclear power stations, not to mention many more--is the first horseman in the apocalyptic hosts rushing down upon us to do us in. Alvin Toffler's Future Shock, while less of a political economy, it heavily embued with the same gloomy aura: a future characterized by ever accelerating change and a comparatively decreasing human ability to cope as change telescopes into ever shorter time sequences. Richard Heilbronner feels that no one is in charge or at all equipped to deal with the problems

threatening us, from terror by armed gangs at the local service station to losing one's job. His thought leads him to the prospect of a new authoritarianism. Meanwhile one of the most serious international capitalist crises ever continues to deepen.

Governments are desperately trying to keep the lid on inflation and unemployment and are spending far beyond their means. Yet the new 'stagflation', defying neo-classical economic explanation, shows governments to not even be marking time. The huge monopolies seem animated more than ever by one single impetus: to grab the loot and run, renouncing even the facade of any widespread reinvestment and development that could meaningfully improve quality and economy of available goods and services. Foreign currencies float. Banks speculate on the money markets into the billions and several large banks have recently failed. Except for Milton Friedman, epitaph for 18th century capitalism, gone is the old optimism. What is replacing the old work ethic (may it rest in peace) and the old optimism when it is cut off by the gloomy clouds assembling on our horizons? Well, a fast buck can be made on the burgeoning depravity trade, viz., the inane but unconscionable decadence of A Clockwork Orange, or the rock opera Tommy, or the depravity of Alice Cooper. One may be overcome with a messianic gloom, or else become Mills' "crack-pot realist" who blinds himself to every outrage, averts his face and learns to condone, and attempts to get as much of the goodies while the getting is good. The other alternatives seem to be preparation for an inevitable terror of either the right or left as tolerance and reason become luxuries that break down under increasing stresses upon the social order as the capitalist crisis

deepens. And if armed action, where it is unavoidable, is not limited by the principles of a social order higher than the one it wishes to end, leftist nihilism will be indistinguishable from the rightist. The most pressing task for political theory today, it seems to me, is the elucidation of the principles of a higher social order.

It is neither within my ability nor my purpose to announce here that the first stages of the final collapse are now upon us. I subscribe to the words of Solomon, who said that man, like the fish and the birds, "also knoweth not his time, until he is ensnared when it falleth suddenly upon him". Yet I see no reason for doubting the validity of the many scientifically reputable prophecies of doom. I accept them: as sage warnings against continuing our present way of life, though by no means as a thorough unravelling of the process known as fate nor a solid foretellings of inevitable events.

It should be noted, and more than in passing, that the current doomsday predictions have, in numerous respects, been predated by the work of Karl Marx and by many subsequent contributors to the Marxist tradition. Two veritable landmarks on the theory of the capitalist collapse are the works of the young Lukacs, which rose in response to emerging issues in the historical environment that preceded the Great Depression, and Rosa Luxembourg's essays which anticipated, several decades ahead of time, World War II. Marxists base their futurology on a theoretical analysis of the dialectic, which is to say the process itself, of capitalist production which cannot be understood through analytical logic alone but only as dialectical social relations. From

a study of this process, and indeed from the dialectical logic abstrated from it though in a very partial way, some of the shape of an emerging higher alternative can be seen. When today we take into account both the recent futurologies and the Marxist literature, all that remains relatively certain is that the sometimes approaching, sometimes receding but eventual "showdown between fatality and will", as Carl Oglesby puts it, inherent in an inexorably ongoing yet fatally contradictory social system, once again looms closer on the historical agenda.

It is my purpose, though it remains to be seen whether it is within my ability, to elaborate, on the other side of despair and dread, some concepts and principles to be part of the higher social practice, tools whereby the future may be seen as other than depressing. Survival, it seems to me, requires options capable of awakening our aspirations, yet thoroughly realistic options derived from a study of the process itself. In the approaching end of a world-age lies the possibility, though as yet by no means the certainty, of ridding humanity of some of its age-long fetters. To serve this task, it has been necessary to enter the current Marxist debate and to come to grips with the overshadowing presence of Louis Althusser. Although most of the thesis is taken up in a dispute with Althusser's conceptions of science and knowledge, the intent has been to use the critique of Althusser as a springboard into showing what Marx offers us in the way of a prudent, measured hope for the future: why we must intelligently cast our lots with radical social change.

My critique of Althusser can be more or less summed up in a single

paragraph. I show that Althusser's version of Marxism offers a strategic science of historical situation. Althusser attempts to pinpoint when and where the Communist revolution will break out. When Althusser's intentions for science are tempered by amounts of modesty sufficient to subdue his cosmic fatalism and its false certainties, his science of Revolution may be seen to contain certain concepts, such as 'overdetermination', which may have some use as social science models. However, Althusser is resolutely against social science and against all models which he rejects as empiricist and thus ideological. His overdetermination, taken further and framed within Althusser's intended deterministic science of the quality and sequence of historical events, bogs down utterly. Yet paradoxically, Althusser's whole program is throughout directed by a dim awareness of and an impatience to grasp the shape of the world-shaking revolution Marx spoke of and that as well finds reflection in the very design of Marx's system. The perennial question: what did Marx really say?

I take the view, from Martin Nicolaus, that the height of Marx's science is "his theory of capitalism from the origins to the breakdown" ("The Unknown Marx", New Left Reader, p. 87). Marx discovered the general laws of the capitalist process which hold in general regardless of capitalist country. Dealing with the life of the form of an epoch and thus, borrowing Althusser's phrase, with a 'deep space', Marxist science does not and cannot, contrary to what Althusser maintains, provide a science of situation for placing specific content according to when this or that event--including Revolution--will happen in this or that country. In short, Marxist science specifies the

content of the base, which is to say, Marxist science specifies but the form of the superstructure. Only in this way can Marxist science speak of a deterministic content to history upon which predictions of inevitable fate can be made, and only in this sense is the superstructure determined by the base. By giving specific superstructural form, Marxist science does not give specific superstructural content, which Sartre says we can only later view 'retrogressively' as real history.

Yet by dealing with the origins and the breakdown of a whole form of social life, form itself becomes historical, viewed as historical content at the level of epochs and periods. This is decisive, for it means that Marx's vision pointed to the possibility of qualitatively new parameters of human experience, determined and formulated by society as a whole during a period of revolution, leading to the determination of a whole new content within the space-time realm in which we live. My effort, it is succeeds, will have been to specify more clearly the form of the one liberating option possible. Though this option is still little more than the faintest glimmering of a hope, in struggling towards it a possibility can become more of a probability.

A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T S

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGE

INTRODUCTION I. Philosophy. Science, The Unity of Theory and Practice.....1

CHAPTER I. The Issue.....33

CHAPTER II. Althusser's Science of Events.....75

CHAPTER III. Base and Superstructure. Political Ramifications of the Idealism in Althusser's Notion of the Production of Knowledge.....96

CHAPTER IV. Ideology and Science.....110

CHAPTER V. Summary and Conclusion.....124

INTRODUCTION

PHILOSOPHY. SCIENCE. THE UNITY OF THEORY AND PRACTICE.

This thesis is concerned with the question of the proper domain of causality and prediction for Marx's science of history. The contribution of Louis Althusser will be critically examined and an alternative answer will be postulated.

Louis Althusser was born in Algeria in 1918 and took his degree in philosophy from the Ecole Normale Superieure in 1948. In that year he joined the French Communist Party and began a teaching career with his Alma Mater. Since then he has become Secretaire of the School, also rising to the position of chief philosopher to the French Party. The first view of his philosophical position to appear in book form was Pour Marx in 1965 (For Marx, 1969), followed by his most systematic statement, Lire le Capital in 1968 (Reading Capital, 1970). These two works mark the construction of Althusser's system and are of principal interest for the purposes of this Thesis.

Althusser's precursors are to be found in the Italian school of Marxism founded and inspired by Galvano Della Volpe. This school, contrary to the writings of the young Lukacs and the dominant trends of western Marxism, was hostile to the influence of Hegel upon Marxism. Della Volpe's first major work, Hegel Romantico e Mistico (1929) portrayed Hegel's roots as consisting in certain irrationalist and romantic currents of German culture. Della Volpe's pupil, Lucio Colletti, took up the attack against Hegel forty years later with his Il Marxismo e Hegel. This followed Della Volpe's only major work after World War II, Logica come Scienza Positiva (1950) which proposed three oppositions: Plato/Aristotle, Vico/Galileo, Hegel/Marx, arguing that the latter in each case was the founder of a new positive science.

Althusser's project is animated by an intense interest in the

Marx/Hegel relation. His For Marx is polemical in this regard, charging most commentators with seeing an essential continuity of development in Marx's position from the 1844 Paris Manuscripts through Capital, thereby interpreting Capital, the achieved science, within the Hegelian framework Althusser claims dominates Marx's early writings. For Marx insists that a radical rupture ("epistemological break") took place within Marx's writings, in 1845, with The German Ideology.

Subsequent to the appearance of For Marx and the writing of Reading Capital in 1965, the 1939 German edition of Marx's Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Okonomie (1859) was translated into the French. With the Grundrisse, markedly indebted to Hegel throughout its over 800 pages, Marx himself claimed to have cast the outline for his Capital. In this connection, it is interesting that Althusser's subsequent works claim the decisive break to have occurred sometime after 1845 and that the break is, moreover, difficult to place. Since Reading Capital, Althusser's writings are, in the main, political and ideological clarifications and rejoinders for his view of class struggle. Nonetheless, the topic of "theoretical revolutions" continues to enjoy a broad appeal, encompassing fields beyond Althusser's interest in Marxist science. The main debate is centered in the philosophy of science around Karl Popper's The Logic of Scientific Discovery (1959), Thomas Kuhn's The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (1962), Paul Feyerabend's criticisms of empiricism.

On the political scene at the time of For Marx, the Twenty Second Party Congress had denounced Stalin. As Althusser stresses in his Introduction to the English edition of For Marx, beside the Marx/Hegel

relation another current within Althusser's system has been his attempt to come to terms with the Stalin phenomena. The (de-Hegelianized) concepts and techniques of Marxist science are used in this regard in "Contradiction and Overdetermination", For Marx. Beginning in the latter essay of For Marx, Althusser completes the elaboration of the principles of Marxist science with Reading Capital. The main outlines of the system are as follows.

Althusser claims that scientific Marxism contains no theory of generic human nature, nor is Marxism founded upon any implicit or explicit value structure. Althusser sees the rupture between Hegel and Marx as involving a rupture between humanist historicism and scientific theory. Marxist science does not see the historical process as the result of decisions constantly made and not made by empirical individuals, who thereby can not lay claim to being the subjects of history. Empiricism as Hegelian idealism constitutes a block to the creation of scientific knowledge. The object of Capital, Althusser declares, is an objective whole and the product of thinking. The constructed categories take the place of visible individuals as proper elements and governors of history. Some of these categories are: relations of production, productive forces, exchange-value, surplus-value. Althusser takes "social practice", without Hegel, to mean various "practices", or "deep structures" of production which, taken together, constitute the relations of production of a global structure of society. Althusser's global totality is "decentered" (while the Hegelian totality is "centered") as it presupposes various "relatively autonomous" structures and superstructures with their own arenas and times of development. Within structural causality there are dominant elements, and

none matches the other in its development.

Althusser rejects Hegelian continuous time and the centrality of the Idea governing all development, which is characteristic of the Hegelian "expressive" totality. Similarily, Stalinism is not caused by a central idea common to the whole Marxist view but is rather a development within a partially autonomous structure, according to the determination of its inner time of development, is disjointed from the rest of the structures. This uneveness of structures Althusser calls "overdetermination"; operative in a revolutionary rejuggling of the elements of dominance, it is possible that a structure may return to an earlier time. Althusser attempts to understand structural causes beyond our knowledge and will which yield the terrible events that from time to time collectively befall us. The notion of a hidden dimension crucial in determining our lived reality is in some sense similar to Freud's notion of the subconscious, only carried to the level of the historical process.

Along with a host of others, Colletti has openly broken with Althusser, charging Althusser with having perpetuated certain Stalinist views of man and history. At the end of this Introduction, I will attempt to show what seems to be at stake in the charge that Althusser is a Stalinist. On the positive side, insofar as he is claiming that individuals, living together in society but thinking and acting automistically and selfishly, do not consciously make history then Althusser seems to have a point. Along with attempting to determine the proper domain of causality and prediction for Marx's science of history, included will be the attempt to deal with the problem of a hidden global structure. We will be dealing with the problem of theoretical breakthrough as a problem of conscious class struggle.

The problem will be dealt with as follows: I begin by assuming, with Althusser, that Karl Marx founded the science of history, our still unfinished task today being the full explication and clarification of this science, including a statement of the significance, meaning and role of a science of history to human affairs. Marx's science is taken as the invariant norm rather than being assessed against an abstract model of science for two reasons. The question of what Marx said is still a much debated issue; what Marx said involved a breakthrough in science, the nature of the breakthrough being at stake. This thesis is an exercise in both the "philosophy of historical science" and in "historical science".

Before turning to the question of Marx's great breakthrough, it is mandatory of me to clarify my usage of the terms "Marxist historical science" and "Marxist philosophy of historical science". After stating my criteria of interpretation within philosophy, I shall briefly argue for my definitions and cite their origins within the Marxist literature. Where necessay, I shall contrast my usages from Althusser's.

THE UNITY of THEORY AND PRACTICE VS THEORETICAL PRACTICE

By "Marxist science" I mean both factual statements about society capable of being declared either true or false as well as all refinements and further elucidations of the social categories through the use of the science. This is a science of the motion of society. Its pronouncements on that motion may be falsified or verified according to evidence given by the social phenomena in question. The categories of this science are social categories, indicating a parallel between the knowing and the known. The link is human practice. The social

phenomena in question are defined by human interests. To the extent that science correctly specifies causes of disagreeable phenomena, phenomena made and perpetuated by human action are also amenable to be changed. In this way, Marxist theory is linked to practice. Karl Korsch believes Marxist science to be founded on the "unity of theory and practice". According to Korsch, Karl Marx did not:

> create the proletarian class movement. Nor did he create the class consciousness of the proletariat. But he did create the appropriate theoretically scientific expression for the new consciousness of the proletarian class, and with it, at the same time, lifted proletarian class consciousness onto a higher plane of existence. The transformation of the 'spontaneous' class views of the proletariat into theoretical concepts and theorems, and the mightly construction of the system of 'scientific socialism' out of all these theoretical laws, must not--be viewed as a merely possive 'reflection' of the real historical movement of the proletariat. Instead, it forms an essential element of this real historical process itself. The historical movement of the proletariat could become neither 'independent' nor 'unified' without the formation of an independent and unified proletarian class consciousness.[1]

It is always much easier to disprove part or all of a theory than to claim actually to have proved it. How can the status of Marxism as a scientific social theory be proved? If we maintain that the erection of theory follows certain human interests which must then be settled in praxis, Marxism, as the science of capitalism and thus of a 'deep space', which is to say Marxism is based on social interests that persist at the epochal level, can only be totally proved at the close of that epoch. We could then see whether Marxism correctly described the death throes it maintained are inherent in capitalism's

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1. Karl Korsch, Marxism and Philosophy quoted in Alfred G. Meyer, The Unity of Theory and Practice (Michigan: Ann Arbor Paperbacks, 1963). p. 99.

dynamic, and also whether the interests upon which Marxism is based within capitalism are able to be resolved after the Marxist analysis. In the meantime, as Marxism helps to organize and understand our experience, the effects of Marxism upon social practice can begin to be studied as a moment of the unity of theory and practice. The way man changes the world conditions the social categories whereby he interprets the world since:

> man is a self-conscious being; he becomes conscious of his activity, and does so by elaborating a set of concepts by which he can count for the world around him and for his life. But in each situation, that set of concepts will be developed which most adequately expresses the human condition, that is to say, the priveleged forms of activity of the time. And since the latter changes through history, the former changes also.[2]

Through social practice, Marxism can be 'falsified', or overthrown, in two ways. In the first case, statements that Marxism makes about society may be wrong, in which case we will suffer for it through a faulty practice. If Marxism is disproved here, we need not worry about the second sort of overthrow for Marxism. Yet if Marxism is not overthrown in social practice against capitalsim, through an effective social practice that escapes capitalist containment and cooptation we can so dramatically change the society that the science was the knowledge of as to render the science obsolete. Marxism is in this sense a truly dialectical social science: the knowledge conditions for its total proof are at the same time the

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2. Charles Taylor, "Marxism and Empiricism" in Bernard Williams and Alan Montefiore Editors, British Analytical Philosophy. International Library of Philosophy and Scientific Method (London: Routlege and Kegan Paul, 1966), p. 232.

social conditions of the overthrow of the social categories of capitalism upon which the science is based. If proved, then a whole new world must be constructed in accord with the science's values and logical structure. However, more of this later.

The preceding definitional statements, being about Marxist science rather than descriptive of the social object of science, are themselves to be classified as philosophical statements. Before the further elaboration of what is meant by "Marxist philosophy", it is necessary to first compare and contrast the above definition of Marxist science with Althusser's usage of the term, and show how it leads into Althusser's conception of philosophy.

For Althusser, a statement capable of being catalogued as an example of Marxist science would be only an application of the science. Scientific statements are only those that may be said to give "positive Knowledge of the human world and of its practical transformation".[3] All those statements specifying the categories of science, which I have included within science, are by Althusser labelled Marxist philosophy (of science). Althusser's Marxist philosophy is to be "the theory of science and of the history of science".[4] Accompanying the advent of Marxist science, Marxist philosophy is at the same time to be a separate discourse.

> By founding the theory of history (historical materialism), Marx...established a new philosophy (dialectical materialism).[5]

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3. Louis Althusser, For Marx (New York: Penguin Press, 1969), p. 229. Hereinafter referred to as FM.

4. Ibid.

5. Louis Althusser and Etienne Balibar, Reading Capital (London: New Left Books, 1970), p. 145. Hereinafter referred to as RC.

Whether explicitly articulated as a disctinct philosophy or left to function implicitly in all that is genuinely scientific in Marx's mature work, Althusser claims that the role of this philosophy is to generate the concepts to be used in scientific analysis:

> ...the knowledge of a real object is not reached by contact with the concrete but by the production of the concept of the object (in the sense of object of knowledge) as the absolute condition of its theoretical possibility.[6]

I agree with Althusser that philosophy is separate from science, though I do not agree that the tools and procedures of science are philosophy. I shall mean by "Marxist philosophy" those statements concerned with demarcating the nature and limits of scientific knowledge as distinct from philosophical knowledge. This is the only epistemological function I grant Marxist philosophy over Marxist science. Whereas Marxist science, as I have defined it, means people concerned with practical knowledge of society, questions extraneous to the concerns of science can only be taken up philosophically.

However, not all philosophical concerns of this sort can be called Marxist. Non-Marxist philosophical concerns of today would be questions of the sort as to whether the soul is immortal, though this is not to rule out the possibility of, at a later date, it becoming a concern of science.

Where the epistemological task of Marxist philosophy is to clarify the science/philosophy boundary, philosophy indicates the types of concerns between science and philosophy that can only be solved through practical-creative activity, by risking failure and trying.

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6. FM, p. 33.

This is ultimately to assert the irreducible necessity of practice to theory. A world without practice would be absurd for not only would man know nothing, he could not exist in the world. By asserting the irreducible necessity of theory to practice, Marxist philosophy gives realization that the historical world is man-made. By defending the transcendant nature of human intelligence and creativity against the positivist trend to reduce man in his totality to that which factually is at any point in time, Marxist philosophy, in the hands of those who risk themselves, is as well an ethical tool used to oppose that which is. But it is no abstract, artificial ethics.

In pointing to what science has shown, philosophy helps to make positive and real the only open avenue in a contradictory and collapsing social order. Yet as the carrier of new needs which have become vital, philosophy must also be viewed as distinct from the knowledge of what is, from science, and as transcendance. If history is the one true temporal home of man and the scene of his development and fulfilment through his labor, then the new symbols and ideas rushing through philosophy must be both felt and seen as what is required to abort the approaching collapse of civilization and, at the same time, provide for the enlarged mental and emotional development of human experience. Put another way, if we are what we do such that we make ourselves only by making and enlarging our world, then to understand history and to change it is to find out more of ourselves. This is because truth in the unity of theory and practice, in dialectics, can only be determined within the subject-object of totality. Dialectical knowledge understands persons--you and me--within our history as parts of the problem and also potentially of the solution. While

positivism attempts an exemption from the flux and tension of history by excluding from consideration the subject of knowledge and history and is only unaware of its own material role and assumptions, serving by innocently perpetuating the status quo, Marxist philosophy takes up the higher principles of the proletariat which it clarifies against those of the bourgeoisie.

Marxist philosophy is the theory of freedom in its epistemological role at the science/philosophy boundary, elucidating the phenomenology of creativity which limits the range of scientific certainty in our knowledge of the course of future events. In its ethical role it is today the transcendant element in the unity of theory and practice. Who do I subscribe to this conception of philosophy and this empiricism of historical science?

To come to grips with Marx as bold thinker of the modern era and of the future, we must first understand Marx's point of departure by understanding what Marx was objecting to in the "Young Hegelians". The first step towards Marx's innovation was his move away from the 'philosophical', that is to say speculative, procedures of his predecessors. Marxist science must meet a much harder proof than a speculative, philosophical proof could ever be, a proof just as hard as the facts of life may be, for anything less than 'hard' empirical proof may coast over hard facts of life, the conditions of living and dying, for a more agreeable speculative history existing "only in the consciousness, the opinions and the ideas of the philosophers, only in the speculative imagination".

7. 8, p. 13

> The premises from which we begin are not arbitrary ones, not dogmas, but real premises from which abstraction can only be made in the imagination. They are the real individuals, their activity and the material conditions under which they live, both those which they find already existing and those produced by their activity. These premises can thus be verified in a purely empirical way.[8]

In Chapters II and III of the thesis, I show that Althusser's science reflects his conception of the relation of science, the world and philosophy, viz. the relation of science to the world is through philosophy rather than empirical methods and categories. Relying totally on speculative grounds, Althusser's science fails to do anything scientific. With its metaphysical rather than materialist social categories, his version of science proves unable to measure or describe anything specific about society, providing nothing that would allow us to distinguish among times and places.

Marx's dialectical science, as we shall later see, is vastly different from the empirical atomism of contemporary Anglo-American empiricism. However, Marx's objection to the speculative generation of systems which are then called contributions to historical knowledge is, we submit, the same sort of objection raised in this century by the positivist tradition. At first blush, this claim may appear scandalous, yet compare with Marx the following statement by Friedrich Waismann of the Vienna Circle:

> ...philosophy, as it is practised today, is very unlike science; and this in three respects: in philosophy there are no proofs; and there are no theorems; and there are no questions which can be decided, Yes or No. In saying that there are no

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8. Karl Marx, The Holy Family, quoted in Georg Lukacs, History and Class Consciousness (London: Merlin Press, 1971), p. 16.

> proofs I do not mean to say that there are no arguments...only these do not work in the sort of way they do in mathematics or in the sciences... But can it be proved that there are no proofs in philosophy? No...[9]

According to Waismann, philosophy demarcates that class of information constituting positive knowledge, not by being a part of what may be called positive knowledge, rather by 'sensing as it were hidden crevices in the build of our concepts".[10] These crevices deal with the limits to a form of certainty, that is to say, with differential forms of justification between philosophical and scientific claims.

The unity of theory and practice proposes, first, that by knowing matter, man's theory is always a relation to, a 'distancing', a 'transcendence' of matter. As Hegel defines it:

> Thinking is, indeed, essentially the negation of that which is immediately before us.[11]

There are two stages of transcence of theory over matter: to know matter: to change matter. The first stage I have labelled science, the second philosophy. All theories which fail to recognize that knowledge is of that which is our relation to matter can be said to have fallen into what Wilhelm Reich calls the "mechanistic error".

> The mechanistic error consists in the fact that measurable, ponderable and palpable matter is identified with matter as such.[12]

Secondly, the unity of theory and practice proposes that both

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9. Friedrich Waismann, "How I See Philosophy" in Logical Positivism, A. J. Ayer Editor (New York: Free Press, 1959) p. 345.

10. Ibid., p. 346.

11. G. W. F. Hegel quoted in Herbert Marcuse, Reason and Revolution (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960), p. vii.

12. Wilhelm Reich, Dialectical Materialism & Psychoanalysis (Noonday Press Pamphlet), p. 18.

forms of theory, of transcendence, are dependence on practice: science for verification---

> Man must prove the truth, i.e. the reality and power...of his thinking in practice.[13]

philosophy to change the world---

> The philosophers have only interpreted the world differently, the point is to change it.[14]

Marx states the general ground of the unity of theory and practice in the conscious human project:

> The chief defect of all materialism up to now (including Feuerbach's) is, that the object, reality, what we apprehend through our senses, is understood only in the form of the object or contemplation; but not as sensuous human activity, as practice; not subjectively...he does not understand human activity itself as objective activity.[15]

Althusser's science is intended to be a science of the unfolding of historical events. It portrays a part of theory, human consciousness, called "ideology", as a part of the object, reality, capable of being the object of scientific investigation. By the terms of our analysis, a scientific theory could not be a science of the unfolding of events for it could not allow the required science of consciousness, even of ideology, for that would be to posit a contradiction in terms. We can have scientific theory but not a science of theory. It is one think to talk of ideology as a pattern of theory tailored to governing a specifically ordered social reality, but quite another to attempt to predict exactly how long and to what extent such thoughts will continue

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13. Karl, Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach" in The German Ideology, op. cit., p. 197.

14. "Theses on Feuerbach", op. cit., p. 197.

15. Ibid., p. 199.

to be thought or that social reality to endure.

When we recognize differential forms of justification between philosophical and scientific claims, philosophy becomes an important tool against an age frequently characterizable through its worship of all that is called science. When science is limited in principle to the task of establishing the nature of that which empirically is, it can not by the same criterion of verification back up claims as to what human interests ought to be. That is left to being the task of philosophy. While only because of the unavoidable, empirical objectivity in that which is, where determinate cause leads to specific effect, is my right to choose different courses of action a meangingful right for I can count on different actions leading to inevitably different consequences. To advance the cause of humanity in its upward spiral to greater enlightenment and freedom requires, as well as inner light, hard factual information detailing where one is in order to meet the concrete tasks at hand at our particular stage of historical evolution.

This account began by claiming that the categories of an authentic social science must also be functioning social categories such that the subjects and concerns of social science are towards the solving of social problems. My purpose was to disvow a posture of abstract value-neutrality for social science while, through the verification principle, designating the scientific approach as one necessary step--to tell it like it is--in a rational human attitude. I then went on to specify that scientific theory, or for that matter any theory, can not simply be reduced to social processes, that scientific theory, including its verification of hypotheses, is always a negation of that which is. And scientific negation, or verification, was distinguished from philosophical

negation, or the proposing of social change.

Now I would like to add that scientific social theory, linked to social practice, is a confirmation through reproduction of the human identity at the selfsame stage of historical evolution. For if the scientific categories are also social categories such that the categories we operate from enable us to identify what we are calling the real problems and concerns in our world, then the same categories must define the human purpose at that stage. They must represent a structure of what is valuable and to be completed through our practice:

> The function of social science is quite different from that of the natural sciences--it is to provide society with an organ of self-consciousness.[16]

When we focus on the question of the valuable and seek for the human meaning in our practice, then we have reverted to philosophy.

Bourgeois social theory from Hobbes to Locke may be seen as one such tentative confirmation of the human identity. Its philosophy was united with its practice for the preservation and extension of its world. In short, the empirical terrain of its practice was at the same time the terrain for the fulfillment of its values. This congruence of theory and practice is most pronounced in the early stages of the bourgeois mission of converting its physical and social environment into commodity/exchange relations. With the American frontier still beckoning, Thomas Jefferson is a paradigm case of the early bourgeois unity of theory and practice. As Professor Macpherson so admirably put it, Jefferson held that:

> property in the means of one's own labor was not

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16. Joan Robinson, Freedom and Necessity An Introduction to the Study of Society. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1970, p. 120.

> only rightful in itself but was also an indispensable safeguard of individual liberty. With one's own small property one could not be made subservient. And small property was the great guarantee against government tyranny as well as against economic oppression. It was to secure individual liberty, and all the virtues that can flourish only with sturdy independence, that Jefferson wanted America to remain a country of small proprietors.[17]

However, as soon as all the property became used up, as it had rather early in England, society was bound to become divided into two classes: those who held property and those who did not. The propertyless became the working class dependent for employment on those with property. John Locke gave the Whig position that the State existed by virtue of a mutual contract entered into by the propertied for the protection of private property.[18] Although workers were bound to the state under force of law to observe the rights of private property, as the propertyless they could not be considered as full members.[19] Thus the bourgeois state did not confirm their human identity nor was bourgeois practice a worker's science.[20] Already splits were occuring between the universal new definition of the human, viz. universal and equal protection of private property, and the growing sector of the less than human within the population. From John Stuart Mill through Hobhouse and T. H. Green, whom we may schematically refer to as attempts to develop the philosophical, normative side of bourgeois

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17. C. B. Macpherson, Democratic Theory, Oxford, Claredon Press, 1973, p. 135.

18. John Locke, Second Treatise of Government.

19. C. B. Macpherson, The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism, Oxford: University Press, 1962, p. 227.

20. Christian Bay, No Contract, No Political Obligation, Edmonton, June 3, 1975, p. 8.

theory, market-place evolution towards concentration of capital and declines in entrepreneurship conflicted more and more with the liberal values. Instead of diversity, mass society was taking shape, instead of social freedom to allow individual growth and development, wage slavery, obscene consumption by the haves. It was becoming more and more difficult to see in the developing bourgeois theory a confirmation of the human identity. Liberalism appeared 'idealistic', overly optimistic, more abstract, and seemed to trail off towards another world while in this one racked by confusion and dilemmas. At the same time, bourgeois science was unable to comprehend the periodic crisic cycle. As bourgeois science as well as its values became separated from the evolutionary process of bourgeois society, a newer and better science and a newer and better philosophy came to be required. A new social theory, Marxism, set out to refound the human identity. It attempted to do so by founding the special identity of the hitherto excluded propertyless class. Keynsian economics may be seen as an up-date upon bourgeois science which attempted to control the crisis cycle. Whether it finally proves to be only a stop-gap is one of the empirical questions to today. Certainly welfare capitalism falls short of Mill's ideal of individual development, remaining well with the commodity preoccupied society characterized by Professor Macpherson as 'possessive individualist". And the extraction of surplus-value continues. What of the Marxist alternative?

When Marxism enters with new concepts around a new value structure, it remains enigmatic. Bourgeois identity resides in commodities and capitalism, the identity of the new person of the 21st. century will reside in community and socialism. We find that Marxism's new

categories adequate to the new situation describe only the impossible bourgeois world at its new stage of evolution. Not until after a successful revolution can Marxism be said to have refounded the human identity. Marxism becomes a science as the evidence verifies it, Marxism begins to refound the human identity only when the values it is based upon become acted on in the class struggle.

Marxism gives the structural laws of capitalist development, which exist either at high levels of empirical generality or as clarifications of felt vicissitudes within the liberal value structure. But Marxism can not predict the if and when of whether the new historical class emerging from the wreckage of the capitalist market-place will ever rise above the bourgeois values of possessive individualsim. To attempt to reduce the process of thought to objective historical processes, we have seen, would be to commit the mechanistic error.

To sum up, bourgeois social theory and practice are for a time united. Then the capitalist world is capable of being adequately comprehended. This occurs after bourgeois social theory and practice becomes what it is, after it rises over the feudal world and in its implementation produces a whole new world order. As its values evolve and as the society develops, the power of comprehension begins to be lost. Marxism once again brings bourgeois theory and practice under comprehension, though this time bourgeois theory is seen as a realm of ideological delusion that, if it persisted, would forever prevent a rational analysis of the runaway course of events and doom would be sealed. Nor can Marxism predict in advance whether it will be able to change people's lives and in time. Until Marxism is triumphant in the advanced capitalist areas, Marxism itself can neither be considered

verified in totality, not yet a refounding of the human identity or a scientific knowledge of man and Marxism. We still lack the full evidence or identity of our own communist practice. We have only our transcendent will and our solidarity, such as they are, and several socialist examples that have sprung from other, less developed, situation. All this leaves of scientific socialism is Marxism's dialectical method*. From out of the void beyond capitalism it remains for us in the advance west to create our revolution.

The above rather extended argument spells out why, contrary to Althusser, "science" has been taken to be empirically-oriented as well as dependent upon theory, while "philosophy", again contrary to Althusser, is taken as a realm of creativity and choice between the alternative futures: socialism or barbarism.[21] The intent has been to refuse to limit man in his totality to the requirements of any particular social order, while understanding successive soical orders as stages of human fulfillment. It is now time to look directly at the question of Marx's scientific laws and specify the differences in meaning between Althusser's account and the position held in this thesis. The thesis account of Marx's laws will be constructed through direct quotation from Marx and will receive no further support as the mission, set down at the outset, is to determine the novelty in that which Marx offers to us.

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* See chapter IV below.

21. See especially Rosa Luxembourg's classic essay Social Reform or Revolution.

MARX'S LAWS AND ALTHUSSER'S LAWS

Karl Marx claimed to have discovered "iron laws" operating in history.

> Intrinsically, it is not a question of the higher or lower degree of development of the social antagonisms that result from the natural laws of capitalist production. It is a question of these laws themselves, of these tendencies working with iron necessity towards inevitable results.[22]

Of importance is what Marx meant to include within capitalist production and thereby what is to develop according to iron laws. Marxist philosophy, in the sense specified, explains the limits to that which scientific theory can legitimately be concerned with. In a moment it will be shown that Althusser, holding to a different conception of philosophy, means the concerns of Marxist science to be something quite different.

Marxist science, roughly speaking, deals only with the process laws in the base of a society's productive forces. This is not to say that although Marx and Engels spoke of primitive, slave, feudal and capitalist production formations[23] they meant that one form of production had to follow another in a fatalistic chain.[24] It is to simply say that Marx's particular approach was to examine various historical eras by analyzing their respective social organizations of the economic means of production. Marx never claimed to have discovered a trans-historical process, the teleological laws of which ensured that one social formation would last for a certain amount of time and that

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22. Karl Marx, "Preface to the First German Edition of the First Volume of Capital", Selected Works (New York: International Publishers, 1968), p. 231.

23. The German Ideology, op. cit.

24. Karl Marx, Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1964), translated by Jack Cohen, edited and with an introduction by E. J. Hobsbawm. The last half of the book is a collection of fragments from Marx and Engels on the difficulties of historical periodization.

specified the particular time and place in history and the specific type of social formation that would replace it.

Yet Marx did propose to talk about capitalism in a manner much more rigorous than his analyses of other epochs. Marx's labor theory of value included technical concepts such as labor-power, labor, surplus-value, the organic compositon of capital, leading to the production of surplus-labor from the production of surplus-value and, Marx's theory of the demise of capitalism through the falling rate of profit, the overthrow of a system of production and exchange by the internal growth process of a system dependent on human labor as a form of measurement. However, as Paul Mattick observes, Marx's general law of capitalist accumulation:

> derived as it is from highly abstract considerations of capitalism's structure and dynamics, was not provided with a timetable. The contradictions of capital production could come to a head sooner or later--even much later.[25]

The question of the satisfactory execution of the challenges and opportunities the capitalist chaos offers to the laboring classes is as well beyond the concerns of science. Herbert Marcuse gives the classical view that:

> Not the slightest natural necessity or automatic inevitability guarantees the transition from capitalism to socialism.[26]

When Marx claimed to have discovered the scientific laws of the capitalist process of production, he meant general laws that were to

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25. Paul Mattick, Critique of Marcuse (London: Merlin Press, 1972), p. 15.

26. Marcuse, op. cit., p. 318.

hold irrespective of this or that capitalist country.

> Under capitalist production, the general law acts as the prevailing tendency only in a very complicated and approximate manner, as a never ascertainable average of ceaseless fluctuations.[27] Such a general rate of surplus-value--viewed as a tendency, like all the other economic laws--has been assumed by us for the sake of theoretical simplification. But in reality it is an actual premise of the capitalist mode of production, although it is more or less obstructed by practical frictions causing more or less considerable local differences, such as the settlement laws for farm labourers in Britain. But in theory it is assumed that the laws of capitalist production operated in their pure form. In reality, there exists only approximation; but, this approximation is the greater, the more developed the capitalist mode of production and the less it is adulterated and amalgamated with survivals of former economic conditions.[28]

The laws are general for a reason. While recognizing that each society has a particular superstructure and particular geographic conditions of production, the general nature of the scientific laws of capitalism derive from variations in the superstructure. Marxism accepts these variations but cannot scientifically account for them for they reside outside of science, the superstructure being that realm wherein are exercised human individuality and creativity. Even in a developed,

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27. Karl Marx, Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume III Translated from the Third German Edition by Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling. New York: International Publishers, 1967, p. 161.

28. Karl Marx, Capital Volume III, p. 175.

more purely capitalist formation, the laws remain general in the form of a logic of process.

> In considering such transformations a distinction should always be made between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophic--in short, the ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out.[30]

Marx is distinguishing between two levels, which constrains him from predicting day to day happenings within any capitalist country according to place and time just as he is constrained from predicting what must develop after any epoch, including capitalism, collapses. But his scientific knowledge of the capitalist process allows him to predict that the process will collapse and to say why through the:

> ...absolute general law of capitalist accumulation. Like all other laws it is modified in its working by many circumstances, the analysis of which does not concern us here.[31]

It is here that Althusser's science begins, with the modifying circumstances.

By bringing also under science the "many conditions" that modify Marx's scientific laws, Althusser aims for what he calls a science of the "global structure", capable of entering the realm of space and time:

> ...to understand that the Revolution as the 'task of the day' could only break out here, in Russia, in China, in Cuba, in 1917, 1949, in 1958 and not

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30. Karl Marx, "Preface to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy," in Selected Works. New York: International Publishers, 1969, pp. 182-3.

31. Capital Volume I, p. 644.

in another 'situation'.[32]

Althusser places human consciousness within the capitalist production that is, according to Marx, the scientific realm of total, iron determinism. That way things always happen on time and a science of events is to be possible.

Althusser's science of revolutionary situation is common and, I submit, falsely viewed as an insurrectionary, applied Marxist science in the Leninist tradition.[33] Althusser goes further, wishing to be descriptive within positive science of time and place and appears to make a quantum jump on Lenin, or Marx and Engels for that matter also. For example, Marx thought revolution imminent in 1848, as did Lenin in Russia in 1905, though their theory did not require them to give up fighting when their hopes did not materialize in a particular place or time. As Marx wrote to Herr Kugelmann:

> World history would indeed be very easy to make if the struggle were taken up only on condition of favorable chances. It would on the other hand be of a very mystical nature if "accidents" played no part. These accidents naturally form part of the general course of development and are compensated by other such accidents. But acceleration and delay are very much dependent upon such "accidents", including the "accident" of the character of the people who first head the movement.[34]

A careful reading of Althusser shows that he rejects altogether the classical thesis of applied theory as a moment of the unity of theory and practice, proposing instead the notion of a manifold of distinct

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32. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Russia's Pattern of Development, Marx to the Editorial Board of the Otechestvenniye Zapiski (Fatherland Notes), London, November 1877" in Basic Writings On Politics & Philosophy. Edited by Lewis S. Feuer. New York: Anchor Books, 1959, pp. 440-1.

33. Andrew Levine, "Althusser" in Radical America #5.

34. "Marx to L. Kugelmann, April 17, 1871" in Karl Marx and Frederick Engles, Selected Works (New York: International Publishers, 1969), p. 681.

practices,[35] none of which are guided by theory except theory itself, a "theoretical practice", so that in each practice everything happens as it does as a result of iron laws. Althusser may be seen to follow Lenin only in the sense that Stalin follows Lenin.

STALINISM: THEORETICAL PRACTICE AND THE SCIENCE OF EVENTS

What Lucio Colletti is referring to by Althusser's "organic sympathy with Stalinism"[36] is Althusser's central notion of history as "process without a subject".[37] And it is Althusser's proposed science of this process that we wish to dispute in Chapter II. By defining Althusser's Stalinism in this manner, Colletti is not saying that Stalin, conceived of history as a 'process without a subject'. For Stalin, the subject of history in revolution, in socialism, and into communism was to be the centralised vanguard party.[38] The common denominator linking Althusser's conception of historical process and Stalin's conception of historical subject is their similar conceptions of 1) the degree of fatedness in daily events; 2) the role and significance of every citizen who, in Lenin's words:

> to a man must act as a judge and participant in the government of the country. And what is

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35. FM, p. 229; RC p. 58.

36. Colletti, op. cit., p. 16.

37. J. V. Stalin, Political Report to the Sixteenth Party Congress (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1930), p. 171.

38. V. I. Lenin, Selected Works (New York: International Publishers, 1943), Volume VIII, p. 320.

> important to us is to enlist all the toilers to a man in the government of the state. That is a tremendously difficult task. But socialism cannot be introduced by a minority, a party.[39]

The earlier Lenin of What Is To Be Done and of Materialism and Empirio-Criticism is, by this criterion, much more 'Stalinist' than the later Lenin of State and Revolution and of The Philosophical Notebooks, who in his Will urged that Stalin be removed from the position of General Secretary of the Bolshevik party.[40] Under Stalin, the dictatorship of the proletariat became a dictatorship over the proletariat with a totally bureaucratic, top-down method of government that devised "Five Year Plans" for the people but not by the people, set "stakhanov" quotas, and organized a vast system of slave-labor camps, the most notorious being Vorkuta.[41]

By 'history as a process without a subject', Althusser means that in any direct sense it is not men who make history. As a Canadian reviewer of Althusser, Henry Veltmeyer, puts it:

> The objective structure of social formations is imposed on men by a "hidden mechanism" which determines that structure as the objective mode of the appearance of reality. Thus history is a process without a subject, and men are not the "active subjects" of this process; they are simply its "supports" (Trager).[42]

The fact that there is a deterministic process that men can but support

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39. Dunayevskaya, op. cit., p. 205.

40. Ibid., pp. 220-3, 239, 241, 252.

41. Ibid.,

42. Henry Veltmeyer, "Towards An Assessment of the Structuralist Interrogation of Marx: Claude Levi-Strauss and Louis Althusser" in Science and Society, Winter 1974-75, p. 397.

allows that a science of historical situation is to be possible. It is to claim that the superstructural complexity of social life, which propels the logically complicated yet barbarically simple class law of capitalism, is itself propelled and totally determined such that a science of days and events of revolution is to be possible. And for this class of historical data to be amenable to scientific prediction, the native thought and action of specific individuals, cells, collectives or parties that are always involved in specific events must be irrelevant or illusory, totally set into motion by calculable historical forces. These forces, in the last analysis, turn out to be directed through the vanguard party.

If it is not men who make history die to a 'hidden mechanism' cutting them off from its internal structure and dynamics, Althusser takes the view that it is men who must thereby be disciplined by the party into conformity with historical law. When men are seen as inherently but supports of historical processes, Althusser is left to endorse a tabula rasa conception of people who "must be ceaselessly transformed so as to adapt them to their conditions of existence".[43] Althusser does not say that people should be educated and convinced by appealing to their historically emerging highese interest. According to Althusser, men must be "constantly dominated and controlled", and "ideology is indispensable" to this task.[44]

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43. FM, p. 235.

44. Ibid.

It may perhaps be protested that I go too far, that Althusser offers only an "epistemological and critical reading of Marx".[45] What is significant, it seems to me, is what Althusser claims to have come upon from his reading of Marx, which he then claims to be value-free science, plus Althusser's endorsation of domination and control alongside his notion of total historical determinism. Placed within the corpus of Althusser's writings, 'value-free science' becomes another name for 'infallibility of the vanguard' above all normative criticism. With his notion of a 'theoretical practice', Althusser subscribes, in his words, to:

> Kautsky's and Lenin's thesis that Marxist theory is produced by a specific theoretical practice, outside the proletariat, and that Marxist theory must be 'imported' into the proletariat...[46]

When this rigid separation in the production of knowledge is rejected, Althusser continues:

> all the themes of spontaneism rushed into Marxism through this open breach: the humanist universalism of the proletariat.[47]

With Stalin's notion of an infallible vanguard and Althusser's complementary conception of faceless masses needing to be led, the fastest way to get something done would be slaughter everyone who disagrees and terrorize the rest into conformity. And according to the doctrine of the control over individuals by history, all of the deaths as well as all of one's actions are always portrayed as value-free because unavoidable, for events are always totally controlled by historical

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45. RC, p. 143

46. Reading Capital, p. 141.

47. Ibid.

law and as vanguard one is the personification of historical law.

That Stalinism is indeed the significance of Althusser's science of historical situation is confirmed by Althusser's polemic against "humanism". According to Althusser:

> the whole classical Marxist tradition has refused to say that Marxism is a Humanism:

If this is so, all those who have seen in Marx a humanism are by Althusser's definition not a part of the classical tradition. Althusser continues:

> Why? Because...the word Humanism is exploited by an ideology which uses it to fight, i.e. to kill, another, true, word, and one vital to the proletariat: the class struggle.[48]

The class struggle is total war, undiluted by humanist sentimentality over the value of human life. Humanism is an enemy of the class struggle in that humanism squelches the ability to kill. The humanist:

> loves his neighbor to the extent of turning the other cheek to whoever strikes first.[49]

One must ask, does Althusser's simple caricature have anything to do with anything humanistic Marx ever said? In searching for justification for Althusser's claims against humanism, one has to ask whether Althusser knows anything about the class struggle. For example, the paradigm example of armed militance for today's leftist youth, particularly in Latin America, is Che Guevara, who incidently wrote Guerilla Warfare. Yet Che has said that one must fight with a revolutionary love, and that a true revolutionary is moved by great feelings of love. Che wrote to

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48. Louis Althusser, Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays (London: Monthly Review Press, 1971), p. 22.

49. Ibid., p. 154.

his children, from the heart of the armed struggle in Bolivia:

> Above all, always be able to feel deeply any injustice committed against anyone in any part of the world. It's a revolutionary's most beautiful quality.[50]

This is what leftist humanism is all about, with breaking down bourgeois individualsim not with turning the other cheek. At this point the reader is left to choose between Althusser the Stalinist and Che the humanistic but armed militant. The view taken in this thesis will follow Colletti.

> Althusser is certainly a highly intelligent person, and I have a great human sympathy for him. But it is impossible to escape the impression that his thought has become increasingly impoverished and arid with the passage of time.[51]

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50. Che Cuevara, "To My Children" in Ricardo Rojo, My Friend Che (New York: Grove Press, 1968), p. 182.

51. Colletti, op. cit., p. 17.

CHAPTER I

THE ISSUE.

What then is Althusser's importance? He has been labelled a Stalinist, situated among the bad, and the next chapter promises a hard criticism of his science of superstructural events. Part of the reason for systematically dismantlying Althusser's science is the prospective rise of a neo-Stalinism posed by Althusser's relatively large following. But his Stalinism is not the only reason for studying Althusser nor is Althusser totally bad. Part of Althusser's popularity is surely intertwined with his attempts in his earlier works to conceptualize what it is that is so innovatory in Marx. Althusser's question--"what may be said to be meant by Marxist science"--is our question as well. Althusser has done much to renew attention towards the question of models of causality. Though the model Althusser comes up with is not Marx (it is Spinoza), Althusser is at his best in characterizing liberal notions of causality and in referring to their absence of a depth dimension. In this regard, Reading Capital, chapter 9, particularly stands out. To this extent Althusser has a role to play in the birth of a new world order. In this second introductory chapter, the key issue brought up by Althusser will be spelled out, first saying with Hegel:

> When a man has finally reached the point where he does not think he knows it better than others, that is when he has become indifferent to what they have done badly and he is interested only in what they have done right, then peace and affirmation have come to him.

Althusser observes that before Marx:

> Political Economy thought the economic phenomena as deriving from a planar space governed by a transitive mechanical causality, such that a determinate effect

> could be related to an object-cause, a different phenomenon...[1]

One suspects that Althusser may be onto something when we find others holding a critical stance to the same model of causality. Althusser's definition of ideology[2] is identical to that of Marshall McLuhan. According to McLuhan, in an Western milieu, one is:

> surrounded by an abstract explicit visual technology to uniform time and uniform continuous space in which "cause" is efficient and sequential, and things move and happen on single planes and in successive order.[3]

As Althusser elsewhere observes in his critique of empiricism,[4] the model of causality utilized in explanations of phenomena by political economy was common, not only to political economy but to a whole mode of thought. What we are referring to then with Althusser and McLuhan, is a form of reason that reached its height in the bourgeois period. With Althusser, we go directly to the centre of the controversy between liberalism and Stalinism; whether reason and its accompanying freedom are part and parcel to the bourgeois malignancies and delusions to be abolished by communism. Although in trouble at home in this day and age, liberalism sees itself as a last bastion against a social decline and resolutely digs in its heels.[5] When the model of causality from which its reason functions comes under attack, it is the whole

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1. Louis Althusser and Etienne Balibar, Reading Capital (London: New Left Books, 1970), p. 182. Hereinafter referred to as RC...

2. Louis Althusser, For Marx (New York: Penguin Press, 1969), pp. 228, 232. Hereinafter referred to as FM.

3. Marshall McLuhan, The Gutenberg Galaxy (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962), p. 19.

4. RC., Part I.

5. Isaiah Berlin, Two Concepts of Liberty (Oxford: University Press, 1958).

western tradition, indeed the mind itself, that seems menaced by the encroaching Marxism. As One writer neatly sums it:

> The seventeenth century began with Francis Bacon's Novum Organum which extablished the principles of the scientific method and of objective, rationalistic thinking--principles which gained full control of the official Western mind after Descartes, Newton, and in sociopolitical matters, Locke.[6]

Althusser hurls Marxism to the attack.

> ...Marx does not present economic phenomena--to illustrate his thought temporarily with a spatial metaphor--in the infinity of a homogeneous planar space, but rather in a region...therefore as a complex and deep space...[7]

Althusser means that Marx no longer relied on a 'billiar ball' model of causality featuring interacting individuals, as may be found in the logical atomism of empiricist philosophy, in the competitive marketplace model of capitalist economics, and in the contract theory of the liberal state. Althusser goes so far as to assert that the truth can be obtained solely through Marxist science, which has made a complete break with the pre-Marxist, rationalist model of causality.

> ...when a science detaches itself from the background of earlier ideological formations...(it) inaugurates with (a) rupture the reign of a new logic, which far from being a mere development...of the old one, literally takes its place.[8]

Althusser informs us what he intends to do with the old logic:

> ...put it to one side...expose it from afar to forces which are external--and so drawn out--that like those wine-glasses broken at a distance by a physical reson-

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6. Dane Rudhyar, Occult Preparations for a New Age (Wheaton, Illinois: Theosophical Publishing House, 1975), p. 238.

7. RC., p. 182; see also FM, p. 228.

8. RC., p. 44.

> ance, it comes to a sudden end as a heap of splinters on the floor.[9]

In this chapter, I shall examine some outlines of the crisis in reason: 1). indicating, with Althusser's assistance where it is sound, the crisis in reason that has developed historically fron bourgeois theory and practice; 2). the attempted burying of Cartesian reason by Althusser; 3). and lastly, the issue for the thesis as a whole, how do Marxist theory and communist practice go beyond Cartesian reason: as totalitarian determinism by autonomous structures over man a la Althusser, or as profound breakthrough in reason and freedom?

In admittedly highly schematic fashion, I will try to show how Althusser's characterization of reason is false, arguing for a more sophisticated logic capable of resuming the connection between theory and practice, reason and freedom. Thus I argue that the new dimension Marx ushered in need not mark an end to the notion of freedom animating all liberal doctrines featuring interacting individuals, just as, for example, the physics of Einstein and Heisenberg, while new, does not falsify Newtonian physics. On the other hand, the type of individual required by Althusser's science of events is an overthrow of the liberal conception of man and freedom in its entirety. In Chapter III of this thesis, it shall schematically be shown how Marx's rational analysis of capitalism begins in the old logic and what then happens along the way. From when the transition point is missed, then the corpus of Marx's

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9. FM., p. 150.

analysis must appear, to both Liberal and Stalinist,

> ...as obscure and ridiculous as spherical trigonometry to the inhabitants of Flatland.[10]

To illustrate by way of analogy how classical Marxism stands to liberalism, when long distance travel was more a dream than a possibility, it was generally held that the world was flat and that one could sail off the end into hell. Hell was the unknown. When international trade opened up trans-oceanic routes in search of the orient, it was found that one could get east by sailing west and that the world was therefore a sphere. Yet this discovery could not dispute the notion that the world, except for changes of altitude, was indeed flat, since the earlier notion was based on the simple experience of gravity. The point is that as man's experience broadens through development of the productive forces, new dimensions of experience are opened up that cannot be understood as simple extensions of that which preceeded them. The new dimension only invalidates speculations based on the old experience which kept that experience closed in upon itself, speculations that extrapolated that given ad infinitum into the unknown and ended up with Hades just beyond its known gates. In short, along with the new causality I shall be arguing for progress in freedom.

MODERATE SCARCITY vs. PRODUCTIVE CONSUMPTION

Even though he later gets off track, Althusser is exciting because he correctly publicizes this new historical dimension at the point where it meets and goes beyond the capitalist world--at capitalist economics and at the liberal theory of distributive justice. According

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10. Aleister Crowley, KONX OM PAX.

to John Plamenatz:

> What, indeed, could be less scientific than to construct the notion of man, in abstraction from society, and then to explain society in terms of his desires.[11]

The talented and recent liberal contributor, John Rawls, holds to a conception of 'moderate scarcity' from which he takes up his problem of political obligation and the apportioning out of at least moderately scarce resources upon which are placed conflicting demands.[12] While there is some credence to his argument, Rawl's whole discussion is undercut when Marx focusses on the conditions and historical nature of moderate scarcity--that ideal state of affairs envisaged by all liberalism and an ideal state that itself becomes a problem where it is taken as a prior condition preceding analysis rather than as a condition almost totally manmade. Instead of taking human wants as anthropological givens, Marxism examines their historical origination. As Althusser puts it:

> ...consumption is <u>double</u>. It does include the <u>individual consumption</u> of the men in a given society, but also <u>productive</u> consumption...This kind of consumption includes: the 'objects' of production...and the instruments of production...necessary for production.[13]

There are thus two departments of production:

> Department I, devoted to the reproduction of the conditions of production on a simple or extended basis, and Department II, devoted to the production of the objects of individual consumption.[14]

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11. John Plamenatz, <u>The English Utilitarians</u>, p. 152.

12. John Rawl, <u>A Theory of Justice</u> (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972).

13. <u>RC</u>., p. 165.

14. Ibid.

Althusser concludes that needs are subject to:

> a double structural, i.e. no longer anthropological determination: the determination which divides the products between Departments I and II, and assigns to needs their content and meaning...[15]

Already Althusser begins to take some big steps away from Marx towards Stalinist principles. Althusser goes from the social nature of needs that reproduce the conditions of production to a total determination of needs by the conditions of production and, in turn, to the total social determination of what people do and the outcome of what they do by the conditions of production.

> The true 'subjects' (in the sense of constitutive subjects of the process) are therefore not these occupants or functionaries, are not, despite all appearances, the 'obviousness', 'real men'--but the definition and distribution of these places and functions. The true 'subjects' are these definers and distributors: the relations of production (and political and ideological social relations).[16]

Althusser's science of events rejects altogether the rationalist view of man as thinking, planning, experimenting, creating, and acting creature.

> Strictly in respect to theory, therefore, one can and must speak openly of Marx's theoretical anti-humanism, and see in this theoretical anti-humanism the absolute (negative) precondition of the (positive) knowledge of the human world itself, and of its practical transformation. It is impossible to know anything about men except on the absolute precondition that the philosophical (theoretical) myth of man is reduced to ashes.[17]

By pointing out to the liberal economists and philosophers the fact of productive consumption, Althusser maintains a fidelity to Marx as the

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15. Ibid., p. 167.

16. Ibid., p. 16.

17. FM., p. 229.

following ponderous statement from the Grundrisse shows:

> The moments of the process of production which have been consumed to form the product are simultaneously reproduced in it. The whole process therefore appears as productive consumption...This consumption is not simply a consumption of the material, but rather consumption of consumption itself, but it consumes the given form of the object only in order to posit it in a new objective form, and it consumes itself only in its subjective form as activity.[18]

Althusser exceeds Marx, however, when Althusser equates human needs to the processes whereby needs are secured. Althusser makes what has been referred to in Introduction I as the 'mechanistic error': the failure to keep in mind the nature of the separation between thought and reality. Just as totally as Rawls' 'moderate scarcity' neglects the nature of scarcity, Althusser has neglected the intervening step between needs and their successful procurement by leaving everything up to the conditions of production. Before productive consumption can be said to have occured, at a more concrete level another, specifically rational, double determination must have occurred. In his Discourse on Method, Rene Descartes characterizes this rationalism, rejected by Althusser, as:

> ...a practical philosophy by means of which, knowing the force and the action of fire, water, air, the stars, heavens and all other bodies that environ us...we can in the same way employ them in all those uses to which they are adapted, and thus render ourselves the masters and possessors of nature.[19]

The 'double determination' of rational causality consists in: a) physical cause and effect as inscribed within natural law; b) the

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18. Karl Marx, Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft). Translated with a Foreward by Martin Nicolaus. (Aylesbury, Bucks: Pelican Books, 1973), pp. 300-1.

19. Rene Descartes, The Philosophical Works of Descartes. Volume I. Translated by Elizabeth S. Haldane and G. R. T. Rose (Cambridge: University Press, 1969), p. 119.

physically intervening human cause who consciously sets in motion the natural cause leading teleologically to the ends man desires. Although it is true that liberalism, including its social theory, fails to get beyond an "instrumentalist reason"[20] ever to consider productive consumption, Althusser's account is nonetheless based upon an enormous omission. Productive consumption, though clearly not a Cartesian process, does not falsify Cartesian rationality which it instead uses upon nature.

Of productive consumption Althusser correctly observes:

> This discovery plays an essential part in the theory of the realization of value, in the process of capitalist accumulation, and in all the laws that flow from its.[21]

Althusser includes social relations among that produced within productive consumption. To say that social relation--politics and ideology--are produced within productive consumption, as Althusser does, is once again to commit the mechanistic error of equating thought to material processes. The strongest that can be said is that social relations are reproduced through productive consumption. As Althusser correctly observed, Marx was referring to the realization of capital through commodity production. But capital can only be realized by a businessman when his product is chosen and bought by someone, thereby affirming that the product contains "socially necessary labor time".[22] Private profit is realized through ownership of the means of production, and only

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20. Max Horkheimer, Eclipse of Reason (New York: Seabury Press, 1974), pp. 37, 48-49, 91, 153, etc., see also his Critique of Instrumental Reason (New York: Seabury Press, 1974).

21. RC., p. 166.

22. Karl Marx, "Wages, Price and Profit" in Karl Marx & Frederick Engels, Selected Works (New York: International Publishers, 1968), p. 205.

indirectly through politics and ideology which are not marketable in the same sense as are commodities. Once we focus on the profit motive behind a system of massive production and waste, Rawls' 'moderate scarcity' takes on a new, historical meaning.

Instead of disputing or otherwise overthrowing analytical calculation and atomistic freedom within 'moderate scarcity' Marx gave it a new dimension of meaning by showing how the self-interested calculation of private men in search of private goods connects and binds all to the same capitalist system. Those ambguities mitigating against a total fatedness within the system derive from the role of human creativity and choice at both consumption and production ends of the process. Yet from the manner in which individuals are connected and the process functions, the process turns back to condition, through reward and punishment, the very forces which propel the system. Marx spells this out in Capital volume III where he shows how the capitalist system relates independent individuals to one another through the "social labor time" represented in the commodities they exchange.[23] Social labor time is an aggregate value, depending on the use-value (the use a society has for the commodities) one has produced. One is free to produce what one likes and to determine how to maximize one's efficiency. Yet one can not tell in advance the amount of value that the labour expended will be worth, which is decided by the market. To take an extreme example for purposes of illustration, an industrialist gambles on hoola hoops and makes a fortune. Other capitalists decide to become involved. No one can pre-

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23. Ibid.; see also Karl Marx, Capital, Volume III (New York: International Publishers, 1967), chapters IX, X; perhaps the most famous statement of this phenomena is to be found in his Capital, Volume I, chapter 1, section 4, "The Fetishism of Commodities".

dict how long the fad will last. When it abruptly ends, several warehouses full of worthless hoola hoops remain. This waste factor is part and parcel of capitalist production relations. Ambiguity derives from the individual actions of individual capitalists and from the choices of individual consumers. It is precisely through these ambiguities that the law of value operates. I can not develop here Marx's claim that a commodity sells at its market-value when the social labour expended in its production equals the social demand for that commodity and that a profit is realized by selling a commodity at the value of the labour contained in it.[24] Suffice it to say that 'surplus-value' must not be taken simplistically. Socially necessary labour time determines market-value and the individual winners and losers as an average that operates at the level of the society as a whole. At the demand side, there is the same frustration and chaos. Social need as expressed through the market is not identical with the real need (real need = actual desires of individuals) but to the "effective demand" determined in part by individual buying power, which in turn relates back to the value of labour for the capitalist and of labour time for worker. The ratio between demand and supply comes to be regulated by the over-riding law of value, itself not consciously regulated. The "definers and distributors" which Althusser refers to do operate, but only as a ceaselessly fluctuating society-wide equilibrium of individual decisions that balance, oppose, and often defeat each other. But they do not do so through mere chance and proximity. They do so, commodities are measured and value assigned, through

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24. Marx, Capital III, p. 192; "Wages, Price and Profit", p. 215.

a strict social law that each, executing the full chance that in his own, by his own efforts propels.

Marx could say that consumption is double for he showed that to consume a use-value is also to produce, for the system, a value able to be measured by labor. It is a reproduction of the value form for in saying that an article is worth a certain amount of the (hard won) value of one's own labor is also to bestow upon the article a characteristic it didn't yet have, a value, which in turn contributes to the process of assigning a profitability to the production process that created it, and to the 'increase in the proletariat'.

Marx's law of value must be distinguished from the doctrine of "counter-finality", to be discussed below, that is found in both Sartre and Engels and which describes the frustration of the atomistic units from within the atomistic perspective.[25] Althusser, for the wrong reasons, rejects the doctrine as unMarxist.[26]

By showing that the 'iron laws' of capitalist production are propelled by the atomism and randomness of individual decisions, Marx has left the atomistic perspective to usher into social analysis a whole new dimension--"a spherical trigonometry to the inhabitants of Flat-

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25. A huge difference exists between the description of alienation in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, "The Communist Manifesto" in Selected Works, p. 41 and in Jean-Paul Sartre, Critique de la Raison Dialectique, precede de Question de Methode, Tome I, Theories des Ensembles Pratiques (Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1960), p. 258; for a statement of the problem somewhat similar to Sartre's, see "Engels to Bloch, 21 September, 1890" in Selected Works, p. 692.

26. FM., pp. 117-128.

land"--with the fact of the existence of atomistic freedom remaining absolutely central to Marx's analysis. Marx's account of the transaction nonetheless remains historical through and through for the objects and effects of individual choices are social and define value at the attained cultural level of social production.

> My standpoint, from which the evolution of the economic formation of society is viewed as a process of natural history, can less than any other make the individual responsible for relations whose creature he socially remains, however, much he may subjectively raise himself above them.[27]

> ...the number and extent of his so-called necessary wants, as also the modes of satisfying them, are themselves the product of historical development, and depend therefore to a great extent on the degree of civilization of a country, more particularly on the conditions under which, and consequently on the habits and degree of comfort in which, the class of free labourers has been formed.[28]

We pause here in our description of Marx's new dimension to indicate the consequences for Althusser of his rejection of Cartesian causality. Then we examine the error in Althusser's characterization of reason--the absence of freedom--and show it to be part of a wider problem within a historical development:

> ...the rule of freedom, once brought to pass, necessarily turns into the opposite: the automatizing of society and human behavior.[29]

Our task, I argue, is not a rejection of Cartesian reason and the rule of freedom as Althusser attempts, which can only serve to perpetuate

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27. Karl Marx, "Preface to the First Ferman Edition" in Capital I, p. 10.

28. Capital, Volume I, p. 171.

29. Horkheimer, Critique of Instrumental Reason, pp. IX-X.

existing unfreedom, but the elaboration of a higher logic capable of reinstituting the rule of freedom.

The Burial of Cartesian Reason: Althusser's Rejection of Freedom

Althusser rejects the notion of "alienation" as a false that is to say unscientific, term for, according to him, it is but an imaginary relation and "does not describe a reality".[30] Althusser has rejected individual reason and freedom, portraying the individual as a totally determined automaton.[31] This is not the place to attempt an outline of Marx's theory of alienation. Suffice it for the moment to say that Marx meant by alienation the loss by man of the ability to control his life and profit by his activities.[32] Althusser portrays the break between reason and the ordering of one's life not as catastrophe but as a necessary development to be pressed forward and celebrated:

> ...once we have broken with the religious complicity between Logos and Being...these tacit pacts in which the men of a still fragile age secured themselves with magical alliances against the precariousness of history and the trembling of their own daring.[33]

Trembling at his own daring, Althusser becomes the archetypal Faust, renouncing the 'magic' of reason over existence. To continue this third-rate melodrama a few more lines, Faust had to break one pact in order to

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30. FM., p. 234.

31. RC., p. 16; FM., p. 229.

32. Two good treatments on the subject of alienation: Bertell Ollman, Alienation, Marx's Conception of Man in Capitalist Society (Cambridge University Press, 1971). Istvan Meszaros, Marx's Theory of Alienation (London: Merlin Press, 1970).

33. RC., p. 17.

sign another. It is Mephistopheles who gloats at the death of reason. Althusser's structural causality is waiting in the wings. Simple respect requires a viewing of the corpse before interment.

When we examine Althusser's version of the "pact between Logos and Being", we see front and center the omission of the Cartesian rational determination outlined above. Althusser refers to Hegel, somewhat simplistically, as an example of the 'pact' in need of breaking.

> The whole of the Hegelian dialectic is here, that is, it is completely dependent on the radical presupposition of a simple original unity which develops within itself by virtue of its negativity, and throughout its development only ever restores the original simplicity and unity in an ever more 'concrete' totality.[34]

This is not the place to defend and elaborate a view of Hegel contrary to the one advanced by Althusser. We simply point out that Althusser interprets the Hegelian system in the most teleological sense possible, such that all freedom is totally absent.[35] Everything is totally determined. In Althusser's account, Descartes is not refuted, he is not even intelligible.

The Connections of Logos to Being Through Logic and of Reason to Freedom

Cartesian reason is linked to freedom since reason without action is useless. Christian Bay rates freedom the most important value for it alone, he maintains, allows the securing of the means to satisfy our needs.[36] Rather than the mystical process of an ever posited and trans-

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34. FM., p. 197.

35. For a defence of the freedom content in Hegel's thought, see Herbert Marcuse, Reason and Revolution (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960).

36. Christian Bay, The Structure of Freedom (New York: Atheneum, 1965), p. 14.

cended opposition of Logos to Being, a totally solipsistic mental process, we see in Being a task for reason that may or may not be satisfactorily completed. This task is only able to unfold when we can discern that the world, Being, obeys certain fundamental laws independent of our will, that it nonetheless does not behave arbitrarily according to the whim of fairies. Here we see the deficiency in Althusser's argument that springs from his enormous omission. Long ago, Immanuel Kant censured the "dogmatic philosophers"who seek:

> the sources of metaphysical judgements in metaphysics itself, and not apart from it in the pure laws of reason generally...[37]

By simply opposing Logos to Being, Althusser omits the fact of the law-like behavior of the world itself, necessitating the human freedom to intervene physically, to select between different causes leading to different effects, and to work through cause to desirable ends, thereby renewing and increasing the free power of the logically reasoning individual. This growth of freedom is only possible when the individual is 'being logical', when his logic of understanding is adequate to the logic of motion of the world before him.

Bourgeois theory has always advanced an essentially non-substantive notion of freedom. This constituted its greatest achievement. For Hobbes, as for Machiavelli, freedom simply meant the ability to use or abuse nature and one's fellows at one's own risk of reprisals official or non-official, in short, a freedom from control by the final causes which figured so highly in medevil political theology. The doctrine was revolutionary because it freed the individual from superstition and irrational fear, identifying the human person as an irreducible unit of

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37. Immanuel Kant, Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1950), p. 19.

autonomy and reason. Freedom could be advanced as non-substantive for, consonant with the definition of freedom we have advanced above, the theory did not need to specify the content of this of that act. Instead of the hidden transcendental presence of a ghostly unmoved mover engendering a "final cause" to every act, man himself consciously occupied the transcendental realm, during the Enlightenment and after, with logical categories and material values which he could articulate and fulfill through his practice. The value structure was constructed through a renewed awareness of scarcity; logic and freedom were the tools to meet scarcity through the creation of material goods. The bourgeoisie was characterized by its fantastic ingenuity (the reality of its freedom) in the struggle against scarcity. Yet its logic and goals worked to reduce nature and individuals to things. It was characteristic of the Cartesian method:

> ...to divide up each of the difficulties I examined into as many parts as possible...(then) commencing with objects that were the most simple and easy to understand, in order to rise little by little, or by degrees, to knowledge of the most complex...[38]

Thus the mystical connection linking flora, fauna, minerals to the absolute was sundered. Ernst Cassirer identifies the Logos with this overcoming of superstition.[39] The capitalist market could function once different goods and materials were able to be calculated and compared to each other and competition undertaken for the most efficient means of their production.

The gift of reason, conscious life activity in the broad sense of

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38. Descartes, p. 92.

39. Ernst Cassirer, The Myth of the State (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1946), Part I.

mastery over the vicissitudes of nature and control over one's person, distinguishes man from the rest of the animal world. As Marx puts it:

> The animal is immediately identifiable with his life activity. It does not distinguish itself from it. It is its life-activity. Man makes his life-activity itself the object of his will and of his consciousness. He has conscious life activity. It is not a determination with which he directly merges. Conscious life activity directly distinguishes man from animal life-activity.[40]

It is also true that as the world grows, as one's relation to nature more and more becomes mediated through one's relation to society,[41] this power of comprehension is becoming lost to us.

> It is an empirical fact that separate individuals have, with the broadening of their activity into world-historical activity, become more and more enslaved under a power alien to them...a power which has become more and more enormous and, in the last instance, turns out to be the world market.[42]

Powers set in motion by the onslaught against nature of the earlier, bourgeois reason and freedom have in turn necessitated the historical task of the communist revolution, which is to gain:

> ...the control and conscious mastery of these powers, which, born of the action of men on one another, have till now overawed and governed men as powers completely alien to them.[43]

When one stage in the ascent of reason has grown deficient, to renounce altogether the role of reason and freedom to the securing of our needs is, as R. D. Laing warns, to resort to pure folly, to a faith that is

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40. Karl Marx, The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 (New York: International Publishers, 1964), Edited with an Introduction by Dirk J. Struik, p. 113.

41. Meszaros, pp. 104ff.

42. Karl Marx & Frederick Engels, The German Ideology (New York: International Publishers, 1947), pp. 27-28.

43. Ibid., p. 28.

as suicidal as it is blind:

> It is the ethic of the Gadarene swine, to remain true, one for all and all for one, as we plunge in brotherhood to our destruction.[44]

If reason has been the cause of unreason and unfreedom, Marcuse insists that "reason alone contains its own corrective",[45] the one sure path that Bay, Laing, and Marx entreat us onto. Rather than simply opposing Logos--in this case bourgeois theory--to social Being, I wish to identify the logic, or quality of reason, common to both theory and practice in the bourgeois period. Again in the words of Marcuse:

> I believe it is Reason itself which is the undialectical element in Hegel's philosophy.[46]

In other words, it is not a question of simply opposing Logos to Being. For if reason is to be undialectical, it is to be common to both theory and practice. What is required is a universal logic, up to now an analytical logic, common to the procedures of both thinking and doing. But once a universal logic is common to both thinking and doing, through the doing man modifies his world (as well as his thinking) in a specifically constrained manner. He not only affects a change of form in the material on which he works, but he also realizes a purpose of his own that gives the law to his modus operandi, and to which he must subordinate his will.[47] The undialectical nature of reason by no means requires an ahistorical reason. While recognizing unavoidable lawful

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44. R. D. Laing, The Politics of Experience and the Bird of Paradise (Aylesbury, Bucks: Penguin Books, 1967), p. 79.

45. Marcuse, Reason and Revolution, p. XIII.

46. Ibid., p. XII.

47. Capital, Volume I, p. 178.

objectivity in the external world, the very form of this objectivity and the choice of how to work within it are evolving features of what Marx calls "anthropological nature".

> Industry is the actual, historical relationship of nature, and therefore of natural science, to man.[48]

By equating nature to science through man's productive activity, Marx defines a universal logic. Marx continues:

> If, therefore, industry is conceived as the exoteric revelation of man's essential powers, we also gains an understanding of the human essence of nature or the natural essence of man. In consequence, natural science will lose its abstractly material--or rather, its idealistic--tendency, and will become the basis of human science, as it has already become the basis of actual human life, albeit in an estranged form.
>
> One basis for life and another basis for science is a priori a lie. The nature which develops in human history--the genesis of human society--is man's real nature; hence nature as it develops through industry, even though in an estranged form, is true anthropological nature.[49]

In the Introduction, we defined scientific theory, though dependent upon what is, as a negation of what is, or, in other words, as the 'power of the negative', and we also insisted that thought, though a force in the world, can not be reduced to physical processes. Once reason is seen as the ability to use logic and is not totally collapsed into logic, reason requires the substance of freedom. This formulation agrees with Chomsky's notion of freedom as:

> ...rule-governed behavior and the possibilities for free and creative action within the framework of a system of rules...innate properties but permitting an infinite use of finite means.[50]

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48. Marx, 1844 Manuscripts, p. 143.

49. Ibid.

50. Noam Chomsky, "Language and Freedom" in For Reasons of State (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), p. 405.

Within freedom thrive creativity and imagination.

REASON AND THE COMMODITY FORM

The universal logic, a historical form of reason, is a technology for meeting human need; from the very first stages of the industrial revolution onward the need for commodities. Cartesian logic initiated, we submit, a stage in the human project preparatory to bringing to a close the enstehungs-geschichte (prehistory) of the species in material scarcity. The strength of this logic eventually turns out to be its fault. By his thinking and his doing, man reduces nature (and eventually himself through the ways men relate to one another) to the status of analytically manageable commodities. Thus Marx refers to the bourgeois character of the scientific laws of nature.

> ...Descartes, in defining animals as mere machines, saw with eyes of the manufacturing period, while to the eyes of the middle ages, animals were assistants to man...That Descartes, like Bacon, anticipated an alteration in the form of production, and the practical subjugation of Nature by Man, as a result of the altered methods of thought, is plain from his "Discours de la Methode".[51]

At the beginning of this chapter we quoted two sources, Althusser and McLuhan, in support of our contention that a particular model of causality, Cartesian in character, arose to universal heights in the bourgeois period. Behind Marx, we now add C. B. Macpherson to the list. Macpherson traces the universalization of this logic, with respect both to its populatization and the scope of its application, to the period

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51. Marx, Capital I, p. 390 note.

of the triumph of the early bourgeoisie.

> The materialism of the seventeenth century was a mechanical materialism which read into the natural world the kind of relations which the materialist philosophers saw in bourgeois society. The relation of material objects to each other could be stated in laws of mechanical force just as the relations of individuals could be seen as the relations of units reduced to equality by the market. The doctrine of final causes could be dropped from the analysis of the physical world by men who saw individuals as directed not by final causes but by the impersonal forces which appear to dominate the lives of individuals in the bourgeois society.[52]

Cartesian reason led into the capitalist period, was universalized in the early stages of capitalism and, at the same time, unleashed the development of a new force requiring a new reason to comprehend it, to comprehend the changing human identity. The latter development occurs when man takes his own reason and freedom to be a thing, the commodity of instrumental reason.

> The capitalist epoch is therefore characterized by this, that labour power takes in the eyes of the labourer himself the form of a commodity which is his property; his labour consequently becomes wage-labour. On the other hand, it is only from this moment that the produce of labour universally becomes a commodity.[53]

It may seem that to portray logic as something historical and, further, to tie its social existence and its transformation to the production process, even though in the most general sense as man's relation to nature, is to go too far. But if Marx 'overly concentrates' on the economic, it is because bourgeois society has to this day overly concentrated on the economic to the point where it has brought into question the continued existence of the biosphere while stretching the

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52. C. B. Macpherson, Democratic Theory: Essays in Retrieval (Oxford: University Press, 1973), p. 247.

53. Marx, Capital I, p. 170 note.

human substance to the breaking point--the most universal life categories we possess. To break the connection welding reason to commodification is thus a historical as well as a philosophical problem. Cartesian reason suited men who were poor, alone, and emerging from the mental and physical strait-jacket of feudalism for it confirmed their identity in what they were--rugged individualists, separate atoms of society, free from domination by feudal overlord and evil spirits. But it does not suit us who have for so long used it, the infinitely more rich who are universally dependent on each other and on the total environment that, by so commodifying, is being pushed to its limits.

Thus the procedure we have chosed for understanding social change, besides its realism has the further advantage that it allows us to pose the way out as lying onward and upward. It allows characterization of the organization of the human project in terms of a fundamental need category and a specific technology, both historical, that require for their functioning the reality of freedom. Meszaros says that:

> According to Marx all necessity is "historical necessity", namely "a disappearing necessity" (eine verschwindende Notwendigkeit). This concept...leaves the doors wide open as regards the future development of human society.[54]

The fundamental need category no longer serves human need when it is no longer serviced by freedom, nor is it then anymore the centrepiece to the advance of reason. Freedom itself is at stake, but at a level such that redemption can only be posed as a fundamental problem of reason. Cartesian fire flows unchecked into an inferno, the evil spirit of our undirected social power, which Allen Ginsberg calls Moloch, the ancient

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54. Meszaros, Alienation, p. 118 quoting Karl Marx, Grundrisse der Kritik der Politischen Okonomie (Rohentwurf, 1857-1858) (Dietz Verlag, Berlin, 1953), p. 716.

god of the Phoenicians to whom human victims were sacrificed.

> Moloch! Solitude! Filth! Ugliness! Ashcans and unobtainable dollars! Moloch whose mind is pure machinery! Moloch whose blood is running money! Moloch whose fingers are ten armies! Moloch whose breast is a cannibal dynamo! Moloch whose ear is a smoking tomb!

Transformation and Eclispe of Reason: In Governing Bourgeois Practice and in Governing Bourgeois Theory.

Commodities, manufactured and exchanged as atomistic units, have gone with a notion of man as atomistic, the physical intervenor into the processes of nature and the sturdy,individual contributor of his produce upon the market place. But that beneficial spirit, the 'invisible hand', can not be relied upon forever. The continued application of atomistic, mechanical reason and freedom turns into its opposite. But to understand why this should be so requires a new science for it is incomprehensible within the old. Marx observes:

> This sphere that we are deserting, within whose boundaries the sale and purchase of labour-power goes in, is in fact a very Eden of the innate rights of man. There alone rule Freedom, Equality, Property and Bentham...The only force that brings them together and puts them in relation with each other, is the selfishness, the gain and the private interests of each. Each looks to himself only, and no one troubles himself about the rest, and just because they do so, do they all, in accordance with the pre-established harmony of things, or under the auspices of an all-shrewd providence, work together to their mutual advantage, for the common weal and the interest of all.[55]

With the operation of the law of value, there occurs a continuous enlargement of the ranks of the proletariat. An increasing division of labor, where labour-power is bought and sold, reduces the labour of the

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55. Marx, Capital I, p. 176.

individual to abstract social labour.[56] Instead of using his reason to adjust his personal relation to nature, a worker's labour time is bought and his activities, reduced to repetiton of a few simple functions in relation to a machine, are set in motion by the owner of his labour-time. More and more, rational planning is taken from the smaller entrepreneurs and transferred to a decreasing number of capitalists. Accordingly, the scope of reason and freedom shrink before the repetitive, intellectualized processes of technology. As Herbert Marcuse puts it:

> For the social process of automation expresses the transformation, or rather the transubstantiation of labor power, in which the latter, separated from the individual, becomes an independent producing object.[57]

When production loses its subjective character, becoming to the contrary objective:

> ...reality constitutes a more progressive stage of alienation. The latter (reality) has become entirely objective; the subject which is alienated is swallowed up by its alienated existence. There is only one dimension, and it is everywhere and in all forms.[58]

Reason exists, to be sure. But, less than its object and the forces it sets in motion, reason becomes qualitatively reduced in scope, renouncing comprehension, and with it over-all responsibility, for the construction of one's life.

Marx maintains that anything less than conscious life-activity is for man alienation and sub-human activity. Cartesian mechanical reason

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56. Karl Marx, A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (New York: International Publishers, 1970), Edited with an Introduction by Maurice Dobb, p. 29.

57. Herbert Marcuse, One Dimensional Man (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), p. 36.

58. Ibid., p. 11.

initiated the growth of freedom which has over time led into the relative alienation of freedom. Only reason can lead the way out, but only when reason is no longer collapsed into its Cartesian stage. For behind its banner as the white knight of reason and freedom the bourgeoisie carries the social form it created onward towards extinction, while society continues to scramble for an intensifying production and consumption.

We now schematically observe the rise and decline of bourgeois theory: decline measured as emasculation of the theory of freedom. The leading bourgois theorists, we submit, are those first to adjust the theory of freedom--usually democratic theory--to changes that are occuring in the ongoing social practice. This practice of theorizing allows (bourgeois) society to continue to see in its activities a confirmation of the human identity and, as such, continuation of the rule of reason and freedom. Taking Chomsky's model of rule-governed behavior to depict the function of freedom and the unity of theory and practice, the social rules are adjusted to the ever more rationaized behavior so that, as the rules become more concrete (through Taylorism, automation and bureaucratization) and more equal to and more like the behavior to be performed, the space for freedom in the theory decreases just as there becomes less and less space for practical human intervention. Or, as we have quoted Marcuse, "there is only one dimension and it is everywhere and in all forms". By adjusting theory to the decline of freedom, bourgeois democratic theory itself declines, becomes dismal and contradictory in its identity quest as it gnaws away at the original freedom postulates of democracy (for example, Pareto, Schumpeter, Dahl) on behalf of a society turning into the anathema of democracy. And it also becomes

dismal in a practical sense outlined above, progressively renouncing its position as captain of society and defender of the free in the face of the inexorable process laws of the dialectic of surplus-value.

After a lengthy narrowing of the gap between human values and on-going social practice, freedom shrinks to the most instrumental form of reason (aligned to some desparate production or consumption and the rest is emptiness) normative justification disappears altogether (as in Sartre), and social theory collapses into practice as positivist apologetics. This is the point where Althusser commences his 'critique of empiricism', of the 'pact between Logos and Being':

> ...in the first case that the 'logical' order, being identical in essence with the real order...can only follow the real order; in the second case that the real order being identical in essence with the 'logical' order...must follow the logical order.[59]

In resume, freedom and originality in commodity production became a thing, measured and rewarded on the market, by greater access to commodity consumption. But once freedom was also seen as a thing in the employ of capitalism, reducing it to an instrumental reason and enlarge the ranks of the proletariat, the social laws of the market could come into existence above and beyond this freedom.

Before Marx appears on the scene, perhaps the most contradictory and advanced of the bourgeois thinkers, John Stuart Mill, rejects the ugliness of the capitalist society of his day and beings to grapple with its contradictions. Mill as well holds to a non-substantive notion of freedom.. The content of individual goals and wants are to be be a matter for free individual choice, certainly not to be centrally

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59. RC., p. 47.

imposed by government. Mill vigorously and openly defends freedom for, as he saw it, the free self-development of the individual is both a means and also an end. Only through the practice of freedom can freedom be preserved and extended, the sine qua non of all need satisfaction.

Yet Mill's theory of freedom also contains a substantive notion of "higher needs". Mill desired a society no longer characterized by "the tramping and treading to get on". But Mill's theory begins to depart from practice when practice itself does not rise higher than the god of private consumption of commodities. Rather than narrowing the gap between theory and practice, Mill widens it. Mill's ethical liberalism has tended to peter out in the other-wordly retreat of the 'parlor pink'. What should it have petered out?

Mill thought that the system of private property with member co-ops competing in a capitalist, market-place environment, would lead gradually to transition to the higher needs and to profound individual self-development. Decades after the Millsian revolt in Western Canada, with its numerous co-op attempts, Mill's developmental expectations have not been fulfilled. Instead of an increasing individual freedom, there has followed bureaucratization and the concentration of capital, instead of diversity and autonomy, in all advanced Western states there have developed mass societies and conformity to consumer idols.

Compensation for the numbing, alienating effects of meaningless, endless labour for private profit occurs in the form of a paycheck, itself a numbing narcotic that blocks transcendence in the working class of a system of commodification of human labour as the yardstick for measuring value within a social system of insatiable productivity and waste. Among the sector of the 'the haves' at the consumption end, we find

more pronounced the same cretinization in consumption. No one can predict the next outrageous creation of greed in the search for, on the one hand, ever new sources of private profit and on the other the empty totems of scoial advancement and class superiority that people are foolish enough to grovel over.[60] In such a situation, distributive justice may have its hands full maintaining social peace, and loyalty to its objectives, while it becomes an increasingly dismal and diverting preoccupation. What is required is not a tinkering with the artificial scarcity within obscene consumption but a transformation of need categories to higher needs. Mill at least saw this much.

Mill staked every fibre of his being on his conviction that the class society taking shape before his eyes could be overcome and that man could be much more than he presently was. However, Mill's solution left intact the root of the problem in the historical link of freedom to Cartesian logic and in turn to the commodity form and the prevailing universal form of social production. While Cartesian logic and the commodity form predominate, a self-propelling developmental fixation continues on at the level of the lower needs. Yet why this should be so is invisible to a quality of consciousness tailored to attent to 'the business at hand'. Lukacs observes that:

> The distinction between a worker faced with a particular machine, the entrepreneur faced with a given type of mechanical development, the technologist faced with the state of science and the profitability of its application to technology, is purely quantitative; it does not directly entail any qualitative difference in the structure of

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60. Erica Jong provides a humorous list of these pursuits in a passage from her recent book, Fear of Flying. See Appendix A.

consciousness.[61]

Lukacs sees in Marx's analysis of commodities, from which both Critique of Political Economy and Capital unravel the totality of the capitalist process, a revelation of the historical seal of capitalist society and a thorough going critique of reification, pointing to the possibility of a revolution where, along with institutional change and power change, human consciousness and understanding undergo a broad change of dimension and scope.

Mill's proposal for higher needs, though noble, is an ethics that does not get off the ground because Mill sticks, rightly, with non-substantive freedom, wrongly within Cartesian dynamics and the commodity form which it uses but does not comprehend. Mill accordingly does not spell out the broad structure of reason and freedom capable of securing the higher needs because he has a deficient understanding of the logic of capitalism and of the nature of the higher needs. Mill's proposal for free social change, for self-development through self-development, properly posed is the problem of the qualitative development of reason, the touchstone for a qualitively higher evolution of the species. But the critique of reason is useless if confined to 'pure' theory and an ethical widening of the gap between theory and practice. Only after beginning with practice and a critique of the adequacy of theory to ongoing practice does there arise a practical plea for the unity of theory and practice. As Marx puts it:

> All social life is essentially practical. All the mysteries which urge theory into mysticism find their rational solution in human practice and in the comprehension of this practice.[62]

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61. Georg Lukacs, History and Class Consciouness (London: Merlin Press, 1971), p. 98.

62. Karl Marx, "Theses on Feuerback" #8, in German Ideology, p. 199.

To change society is to meet different, higher needs. But to change society is ultimately to change the people in society. For society to change freely rather than fatedly, for change to involves a breakthrough rather than a renunciation of reason and freedom, each person requires a logic capable of contributing to his own change and to the change of the rest of society. Here we simply say that the new need is for community, the new logic: dialectics.

With Jean-Paul Sartre, bourgeois freedom comes full circle back to Hobbes and Machiavelli and to questions of the stability of freedom at the end of a world order. Gone from Sartre's treatment are substantive concerns where freedom is aligned with need categories. Freedom is treated by Sartre as an ontological category:

> To be free does not mean to obtain what one has wished, but rather by oneself to determine oneself to wish (in the broad sense of choosing). In other words, success is not important to freedom.[63]

Yet this seems to contradict with Sartre's almost Millsian notion of individual self-development through freedom.

> L'homme n'est rien d'autre que ce qu'il fait. Tel est la premiere principe de l'existentialisme.[64]

If it is a contradiction, it is also a practical contradiction that is real and lived daily. The individual is blocked by the action of "the other" in the (existential) war of all against all. Much of Sartre's ontology is an elaborate exposition of the process whereby individual egos struggle to reduce each other to objects and to at the same time escape from the shells of objectivity imposed on one by other egos.

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63. Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness (New York: Citadel Press, 1956), Translated and with an Introduction by Hazel E. Barnes, p. 459.

64. Jean-Paul Sartre, "L'Existentialisme Est Un Humanisme" in French Prose (Toronto: Macmillan Company, 1957), Edited by Galpin and Milligan, p. 148.

Each individual is a consciousness and thus a transcendence who also continually tries, with no prospect of much success, to transcend other transcendences, other individuals. R. D. Laing laments this condition where:

> As was continues, both sides come more and more to resemble each other. The uroborus eats its own tail. The wheel turns full circle. Shall we realize that We and Them are shadows of each other? We are Them to Them and They are Them to Us. When will the veil be lifted?[65]

Theory and practice, in Sartre's vocabulary "being for-itself and being in-itself" are never joined, according to Sartre. From this he concludes both the permanence of ontological freedom--"freedom can not escape its existence"[66]--and the fact that "all are on principle doomed to failure".[67] According to Sartre, we are both condemened to be free and for our freedom to be futile. What this translates to is that we can not escape conscious awareness of the futility of our freedom. It is characteristic of this futile freedom that it attempts to reduce evey-thing and everyone, even itself, to the status of a thing. The manipul-ative, commodifying Cartesian individual in late bourgeois society, him-self commodified and manipulated by others, is a failure in his human interrelationships. His consciousness is separated from his being: from himself and from his social being with others.

Sartre defended the mind, as did Descartes, against all attempts at mechanical reduction. Descartes claimed the "res cogitans" to be "infinite and unextended". For Descartes, the substance of freedom meant the spring-

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65. Laing, p. 83.

66. Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 463.

67. Ibid., p. 545.

board for changing the world: by discovering the latter's laws and by then acting.

> The Cartesian subject, conscious of its power, faced an objective world which rewarded calculation, conquest, and domination...[68]

In our day we are no longer rewarded. Cartesian consciousness and freedom has reduced the world, including the social world, into mechanical form and has reached the contradiction where reason (in the full sense as logic and freedom together), reducing the world to things, is at a scope where consciousness itself threatens to disappear if reduction continues. Cartesian consciousness, employed in the struggle against scarcity, takes the social relations which have grown up in the onslaught against scarcity "as what they really are, material relations between persons and social relations betwen things".[69] Thus the subject exists in "an iron circle of frustration and failure".[70] Sartre never does depart from the atomistic notion of humans as colliding individual molecules with antagonistic consciousnesses. But for Sartre, the 'gulf of being', the lack of being-in-and-for-itself, no longer poses a problem to be overcome by reason and freedom as it did for Descartes. Though Sartre claims to have raised an ontological defence of freedom, he also marks an acute crisis:[71] the point where reason requires a

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68. Herbert Marcuse, Studies in Critical Philosophy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972 NLB), Translated by Joris de Bres, p. 159.

69. Marx, Capital I, p. 73.

70. Marcuse, Studies in Critical Philosophy, p. 159.

71. The notion of a crisis point at the limits of a world-view, as has been advanced herein, roughly compares to Imre Lakatos' notion of "degenerating problem shifts." (see Lakatos, "Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes" in Lakatos, Musgrave editors, Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge, Cambridge: University Press, 1970.

quantum leap before freedom can be reaffirmed as the requirement of reason for the conscious ordering of human life. In like fashion to the theorists of the flat world, Sartre extrapolates the crisis point to the very ends of the human world:

> ...there is nevertheless a human universality of condition...all the limitations which a priori define man's fundamental situation in the universe. His historical situations are variable: man may be born a slave in a pagan society, or may be a feudal baron, or a proletarian. But what never vary are the necessities of being in the world...[72]

After spelling out these universal limitations of being in the world, Sartre's ontology draws to a close by concluding that man is a "useless passion" and "une chose de vomie". Like the theorists of the flat world, he ends with hell. For the ancients, The Pillars of Hercules marked the end of the known and the gates to hell. Beyond the crisis in knowledge glistened a new world. Sartre too is good enough to name the gates to his hell: "The hell is other people".[73] Beyond this Gibraltor, after a breakthrough in reason as logic and freedom, lies the new social world.

Accordingly, we see in Sartre the most extreme separation of theory and practice where freedom and practice, the individual and society, are still expressed in the categories of reason and freedom. The eternal virgin bride, free consciousness, silently awaits her hero, the new need, to lead consciousness away from the purely contemplative pose, connecting, through a new logic, needs and social reality, requiring the

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72. Jean-Paul Sartre, Existentialism & Humanism (London: Eyre Methuen Ltd., 1973), p. 46.

73. Jean-Paul Sartre, No Exit (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1947), p. 61.

advent of freedom and the rebirth of reason. (We refer here only to the phenomenology of creativity, not to specific males or females).

What is for Sartrean theory the gulf between being and consciousness is taken to its absurd logical conclusion by Althusser. Althusser claims that man is indeed not free, but in Althusser's theory this is because freedom disappears altogether, as does the break between consciousness and being, and with it the knowledge problem. The function of 'the gulf', across which individuals are useless and futile, is continued and logically extended in Althusser's notion of the "epistemological break".[74] With the break, the unity of theory and practice, reason and freedom, is finally proclaimed by Althusser to be sundered.

> Marxism is, in a single movement and by virtue of the unique epistemological rupture which established it, an anti-humanism and an anti-historicism.[75]

Man disappears from the account of things:

> Once this connection between rational thought and spatio-temporal reality is severed, the "interest of freedom disappears completely from philosophy.[76]

Instead of theory guiding practice, Althusser proposes the notion of distinct "practices" functioning automatically on their own. What Althusser calls the classical knowledge problem disappears. Rather than the interface of consciousness and being to be overcome through responsible practice, the masses are said to live in a totally determined,

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74. FM., pp. 34-5.

75. RC., p. 119.

76. Herbert Marcuse, "The Concept of Essence" in Negations (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), p. 57.

"secreted" ideological practice.[77] To me, this smacks of fascism and the "volksgeist". It is capitalism that fascism develops out of. Freedom for atomistic calculation and manipulation, portrayed from Hobbes through Bentham and Sartre as non-substantive, put cryptically, finds itself without its non-substance. Only Marcuse's "one objective dimension remains". According to Conilh, Althusser's vision may be captured by relating it to social change in France since 1940:

> No doubt we can measure here the contemporary malaise, our malaise. The existential anguish born from the war, in the night of the occupation, is no longer apparent; it is muted by a huge stupor before the fulness of our knowledge and our unlimited powers. This knowledge surrounds us completely, it penetrates us to our deepest intimacy. It is our mode of being and doing, our ineluctable presence in the world. Nothing can escape it and declamations against science are merely laughable hypocrisy.[78]

With total objectivity arises the spector of total science. When the future is no longer guided by social theory and human will, instead determined by autonomously functioning structures, then the task of science becomes redefined as value-free knowledge of the given. Althusser proposes a "structural causality":

> ...the concept of the effectivity of a structure on its elements.[79]

For, once there is thought to be a law-like development that science can in principle uncover, then it is again the 'all-shrewd providence'

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77. FM., p. 232.

78. Conilh, "Lecture de Althusser", Esprit, 35:360 (May, 1967) 899, quoted and translated in Mark Poster, "Althusser on History Without Man" in Political Theory, November, 1974, p. 405.

79. RC., p. 29.

that is to keep us from sweeping over the cliff into bankruptcy, famine, atavism, a crumbling of the Tower of Civilization, failure of the species. After the epistemological break, exotic new possibilities appear for theory when we are no longer stuck in:

> the ontological category of the present (which) prevents any anticipation of historical time, any conscious anticipation of the future development of the concept, any knowledge of the future.[80]

Once the book of the Logos is slammed shut and the gulf of being sealed over, Althusser is no longer constrained to verify knowledge through experience, through practice. His "theoretical practice" frees him from time to trace the development of the concept off into the most rarified atmospheres of theory to prove that, through the future which must become, all will be well. Marcuse thinks otherwise:

> Only as long as reason is constitutively directed toward empirically given "material" can its spontaneity be more than mere imagination.[81]

The large German Communist party existing before World War II suddenly and almost without a trace capitulated to Hitler while lulled by a false belief in historical determinism as the inevitability of Communism. Only the crisis of a contradictory social order is inevitable. Though man has probed the near planets of our solar system, fascism will remain a distinct possibility so long as man does not explore his own inner space, the newly assembled social existence that has functioned through capitalism: the vast collective subconsciousness of the human species. At the height of its glory, Athens for a short time explored this connection through the Socratic method. But its universals were

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80. RC., p. 95.

81. Marcuse, Negations, p. 57.

destined historically to be more religious, idealistic, abstract because more general than those governing the social reality. Thus its exploration trailed off into the life of contemplation and was unable materially to sustain itself.

What is required today is that social existence must be brought under social control. For this to be an enlargement upon freedom, social control must come through the social practice of sane communitarian individuals who do not individually bow down and defer to an external 'collective' presence that is, in Laing's term, "everywhere elsewhere".[82] Society once organized on the basis of the market-place individualism that grew out of the decline of feudalism has come into conflict with its evolved community basis. The political theory of liberalism does not pose the need for community at par with individual liberty, nor, I submit, do the extant treatments of community adequately defend the notion of the evolution of liberty. Community and individual liberty need to be redefined logically and epistemologically to make them intelligible as compatible human needs. In short, we link social change with a qualitative structural change in the human experience, encompassing needs, logic, and the scope of freedom. In the words of Mao:

> The struggle of the proletariat and the revolutionary people to change the world comprises the fulfilment of the following tasks: to change the objective world and, at the same time, their own subjective world--to change their cognitive ability and change the relations between the subjective and the objective world.[83]

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82. Laing, p. 71.

83. Mao Tse-Tung, "On Practice" in Selected Works Volume I (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1967), p. 308.

And as Marx says:

> ...new forces and new passions spring up in the bosom of society; but the old social organization fetters them and keeps them down, It must be annihilated; it is annihilated.[84]

Fascism equally can arise from the new passions, the pressing need for community, but from the bourgeois point of view as the need for consensus in the face of a collapsing social order, while from the point of view of the alienated masses of the people as the need for community but, dependent on bourgeois technology, expressed through the atomistic logic as universal deference. The new needs and forces require a breakthrough in reason and freedom to actualize them as the moment:

> for completely banishing darkness from the world...and for changing the world into a world of light such as never previously existed.[85]

Otherwise, just when humanity is on the brink of for the first time consciously making history instead of having it driven by the age-old mechanisms of competition and scarcity, a powerful leader will set himself up with a police network covered over by propaganda organs describing the latest jog in the historical forces. As the situation continues to deteriorate from the unsolved, unmastered secret of the commodity form--for ecology as for the human substance--the leader will exploit a fear of the unknown, 'the hell', that we have come to the brink of--which is the social subconscious--into a fear and respect of history as a powerful independent specter. He will manipulate the masses from the position as the man of destiny specially forged by history, portraying his own lost soul as the one organ of truth.

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84. Karl Marx, Chapter I, p. 762.

85. Mao, p. 308.

The issue for this thesis as a whole is how the distinctly historical dimension beyond Cartesian reason, itself historical, is to be understood, what laws operate there, how and why do they operate and, ultimately, how is this new dimension to be used and by whom. Is it the private domain of the structuralist philosophers, perentially below the consciousness of the masses, from which a structural causality operates? Or is it the region of alienation and mystification, to be abolished at the advent of socialism, leading to the conscious production by man of his species-being?

APPENDIX A

And how they live!...electronic ice crushers, wine coolers, bedside machines which make synthesized sea noises, automatic egg-decapitators, humidifiers, dehumidifiers, automatic cocktail shakers, lawn mowers which move by remote control, hedge clippers programmed to make topiary designs, whirlpools which whirl the bathwater around, bidets which swirl the toilet water around, lighted shaving mirrors which pop out of the wall, color TV sets concealed behind framed copies of the most banal modern graphics, and a bar which pops out of the wall in the foyer when the doorbell rings. The doorbell, by the way, plays the first few bars of "When the Saints Come Marching In"--Bob's one and only concession to negritude.[86]

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86. Erica Jong, Fear of Flying, New York: Signet Books, 1973. p. 41.

CHAPTER II

ALTHUSSER'S SCIENCE OF EVENTS.

In this chapter, key Althusserian formulations will be presented, clarified, and explained.

The introduction showed that the fundamental logical and epistemological issue at stake in the debate with Althusser is whether there is to be possible a) the 'unity of theory and practice', or b) Althusser's 'distinct practices', one of which is theoretical practice. Chapter I suggested that the answer devolves upon the question of whether the gulf of being is problematical, in other words, constantly needing to be humanly linked, in theory and practice, by reason because linked in no other way. We have taken the affirmative on behalf of the unity of theory and practice and will be evaluating Althusser's claims in this light. We have maintained, contrary to Althusser, that, in the rule of reason, theory exists and grows only through practice, through objective intervention where the acid test of the self is to go beyond the self for affirmation. Althusser, however, claimed "the non-problematicity to the relation between an object and the knowledge of it"[1]--that is to say; it is an ideological problem but not a problem for science:

> any epistemology that sees the relation between the object-of-knowledge and the real-object as a problematical one, i.e., regards knowledge itself as a problem, is ideological, and for that reason is to be rejected...The only "real problem" is to understand the precise nature of this mechanism (which produces and guarantees knowledge).[2]

Accordingly, the interest of freedom disappears from Althusser's theory. Althusser advances the Faustian notion that men are but functionaries and supports of historical processes, where reason is

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1. FM., p. 186.

2. Henry Veltmeyer, op. cit, p. 392; see also RC., pp. 52-55.

a delusion and not the guide for social practice. Equally, the privileged role of theoretical practice is that it no longer need check itself across the gulf of being. By becoming free of empiricist encumbrances such as the verification principle, the scientist is able to climb every higher into the Elysian fields of pure theory and, by viewing the great mill of the gods in its grinding, know concrete history before it happens.

To round off this summary, we also pointed out that Althusser, though holding to a faulty notion of distinct practices, is correct to claim a radical deficiency in the privileged forms of reason prevailing since the Renaissance. Yet rather than simply abolishing reason and freedon, we showed the rise-as also the decline-of reason to be a historical phenomenon, today requiring a breakthrough to a new level of reason, encompassing new need and passions and a new logic, capable of relinking theory and historical practice. In Chapter IV below, as much as we are able, this problem will be directly approached. Here, we but show that Althusser regrettably ends up more as part of the problem than as part of the solution.

In this Chapter and in Chapter II, we take up Althusser's theory after his critique of empiricism, after the 'pact between Logos and Being' is broken. In the present Chapter, we examine Althusser's criteria for validating his own theoretical practice, along with tracing the construction of his science of events. In short, after the purported death of reason celebrated by Althusser, we take his theoretical practice as an effect of that sad passing. In the main, Althusser's criteria turn out to be non-criteria; his theoretical practice sets up the purported science through an unrestrained flow of

dogmatism that only from time to time touches down in the classical texts, and then with little care or scruples. On the other hand, we also argue that when Althusser's intentions for science are sufficiently subdued to leave behind his rejection of all empirical method and his cosmic fatalism with its false certainties, Althusser's notion of "overdetermination" may serve limited use as a social science model.

TECHNIQUES OF ARGUMENT AFTER THE ATTACK UPON REASON

Althusser's system is interpreted as an example of a style of social theory distantly related to what C. Wright Mills has termed 'Grand Theory'.[3] By examining key examples of Althusser's grand prose style, I shall show two things: 1) the major elements of Althusser's science specifying the major cornerstones being supported through each example of argument style; 2) that Althusser's Grand Theory style takes the place of argument and masks rather than solves the problem at all the main points in Althusser's project for science. Consistent with the premises of science and epistemology that it advances, Althusser's argument squeaks and creaks with dogmatis, in the full historical and theological meaning of the term.

Althusser's own Grand Theory relies on four unacceptable techniques to erect his system.[4] A) Italicization of words for emphasis without further supporting evidence or argumentation. B) Invention of unnecessarily complicated neologisms along with what is to be a structurally

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3. C. Wright Mills, The Sociological Imagination. London: Oxford University Press, 1959, p. 26.

4. I am indebted to Leszek Kolakowski for Althusser's dependencies to 'B' and 'C' in his "Althusser's Marx" The Socialist Register 1971. Edited by Milliband and Saville. London: Merlin Press, pp. 112, 117.

systematic reliance on vague, unsystematic phrases taken from Engel's correspondence. C) Translation of quite simple German words whose meanings are stretched in the translation in order to claim support from Marx as technical terms for certain structuralist premises. D) Effusive praise for Marx's so-called weaknesses and ambivalences which in the next breath are called Marx's strengths for it is behind them that Althusser's system 'for Marx' takes on its whole new shape and is thereby billed as a continuation of the work of Marx. We shall begin with 'D'.

CORNY ENDEARMENT

Althusser's major text, Reading Capital, which Althusser says is supposed to be about Marx's relation to his work,[5] often is about the reader's relation, and Althusser's relation in particular, to Marx, where Althusser explains why Althusser has fashioned so many new terms. In Althusser's own:

> epistemological and critical reading (of Marx), on the contrary, we cannot but hear behind the proferred word the silence it conceals, see the blank of suspended rigour, scarcely the time of a lightening flash in the darkness of the text...It is here that the identification of the precise points of weakness in Marx's rigour is the same thing as the recognition of that rigour: it is his rigour which shows us its weaknesses; and in the brief moment of this temporary silence we are simply returning to him the speech that is his own.[6]

If it were simply a matter of pointing out some textual flaws in Marx,

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5. op. cit., p. 73.

6. Ibid., pp. 143-4.

one wonders how Althusser seriously could dramatize such a common exegetical task. The cue is "epistemological and critical reading" for clearly much more is at stake in the witchery that follows. The con job is first set up by a corny drama involving a lightening flash in what is to be the (non-epistemological and noncritical) darkness of Marx's text. We are told that certain words in Marx (such as "alienation") 1) are testimony to Marx's weakness; that 2) the alleged weaknesses are praiseworthy. Why? Because as weaknesses they are to be dismissed and by their dismissal they allow entry of Althusser's own system, produced, if you will, only by praising Marx. Here it is, Marx's relation to hiw own work. By the end of Reading Capital, Althusser's eyes mist over for the lonely intellectural, Karl Marx, who had to wait all these years past the grave for his first intellectural compatriot, Louis Althusser:

> ...The theoretical drama he lived, in absolute solitude, long ago...Alone, Marx looked around him for allies and supporters...As for us, we can thank Marx for the fact that we are not alone...his weaknesses, his lacunae, his omissions: they concur with his greatness, for, in returning to them we are only returning to the beginnings of a discourse interrupted by death. The reader will know how Volume Three ends. A title: Classes. Forty lines, then silence.[7]

Grand stand tactic number one of Althusser's Grand Theory is a con job that works through corny endearment: smothering old-boy references about humble Althusser reading the greatness of poor reject Karl Marx at the very points where Althusser makes his heists, behind which his whole system appears, while all the time laying claim to Marx's

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7. Ibid., p. 193.

blessing over Althusser's own work. This procedure effusively flatters the victim just where it steals him blind.

ITALICIZATION

Ostentation tactic number two is extensive italicization. It is perfectly legitimate for unfamiliar terms first to be set out through some purely mechanical means in order then to stipulate precise usages, the term thereafter to appear in normal type. But in Althusser, every page, and frequently numerous sentences of every page, contain words set out in italics, not in order to have specialized definitions attached, but as a vehicle for emphasis. For example, Althusser is considering what is at stake in assessing the 1844 Manuscripts:

> This is the location of the discussion: the Young Marx. Really at stake in it: Marxism. The terms of the discussion: whether the Young Marx was already and wholly Marx.
>
> Very schematically, if Marxists want to rescue Marx from the perils of his youth with which his opponents threaten them, they can either agree that the young Marx is not Marx or that the young Marx is Marx.[8]

Why must these be the terms of the discussion when we discuss the young Marx? Are these even the terms of meaningful discussion? For to oppose the Young Marx to Marx (instead of young Marx to the older Marx) is to subscribe to a religious style of thinking in which a book or books of the unrevealed word are claimed to exist. The notion that the person Marx could become "already and wholly Marx" is devoid of all secular sense. Althusser simply does not meaningfully ask the question of in which respects Marx changed over his life's work and in which respects he did not. Through simple word italicization,

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8. Louis Althusser, For Marx, Ben Brewster trans., New York: Vintage, 1969, p. 53.

Althusser dogmatically sets his terms of discussion, rather than his own position, as being the only one possible. Althusser's approach to (The) Marx yields, as shall be seen in greater detail, a conception of science as ordained and revealed word where the word is but one component of a world in which everything is totally fated.

AN ALTHUSSERIAN GLOSSARY

Another Althusserian trademark is the reliance on specialized terms in which to frame his science of events. There would be nothing at all the matter with this, if new terms clarified things by bringing in additional meaning. But for the major problems facing the design of Althusserian science, Althusser frequently offers a complicated-sounding term whose meaning, we find out, merely repeats the substance of the question with the interrogative removed. Thus whatever the question asked, is so, does happen, though we never find out how or why. For example, to answer the crucial question of the criteria by which is ensured the scientific realiability of the writing of the Marx, distinguishing them from ideology, Althusser answers: the scientificity:

> ...the validity of a scientific proposition as a knowledge was ensured in a determinate scientific practice by the action of particular forms which ensure the presence of scientificity in the production of knowledge, in other words, by specific forms that confer on knowledge its character as a (true) knowledge.[9]

Science is science because of its scientificity! Science is a scientific event. Of such are the writing of (The) Marx. The reader may search for

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9. RC., p. 59.

more explanation than this incredible tautology. He may seek, but he shall not find. For the notion of 'scientificity' is of the status of a statement about statements, thus does Althusser's philosophy govern the workings of his science independently of any contrary empiricist structures. Thereby Althusser buttresses his right to make assertions by a prior, blanket assertion, but an assertion itself requiring support just as badly as any other assertions once the dogmatism of theoretical fiat is not allowed. Leszek Kolakowski accuses Althusser's project of trying to plaster over the "difference between 'saying' something and 'proving' it[10] the observance of which Althusser is to be released from through the notion of theoretical practice which has declared the problem of proof to be "an ideological, not a scientific problem".

According to Althusser, his science is not be judged successful to the degree it accounts for given phenomena (such a criterion would be empiricist) but according to the conditions of its production as to who and where it comes from. Althusser sidesteps the simple and direct question of whether or not it works by intending to ensure that it does through total social control by the party. Althusser says that:

> It has been possible to apply Marx's theory with success because it is 'true'; it is not true because it has been applied with success.[11]

In the same vein as 'scientificity', whatever the party theoreticians say is correct because "theoretical practice is indeed its own criterion".[12] By this statement as by the dogmatic setting of the terms of discussion regarding the young Marx, all objections become to

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10. Kolakowski, op. cit., p. 127.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

Althusser so many *non sequiturs* for they lie outside the proper production of theory, so defined. For our purposes, we have taken a contrary approach to epistemology.

Epistemology is a speculative discourse concerned with the metaphysical foundation of knowledge. It cannot by itself dispute the truth-value of knowledge of the world, as Althusser attempts, for then epistemology runs into the question of its own validity and its internal disputes which, under the epistemological criterion, can only be speculatively secured. This validity is secured for Althusser by faith in 1) total determinism, 2) infallibility of Marxism and the old Marxist parties, neither of which are supported by all the available evidence. Later we shall see how 'scientificity of science' flows into the larger waters of Althusser's basic idealism surrounding his total theoretical project.

Another crucial Althusserian category is the vague term "determination in the last instance"[13] which Althusser extracts from a letter Engels wrote to J. Bloch, 21 September, 1890.[14] The main thrust of Engels' letter is that far too much stress has been laid on the economic by superficial materialists who portray it as an all powerful *deus ex machina* ordering the total flow of history. The import of Engels' stand seems to be, not to dispute whether such control comes under this or that impersonal, materialistic agency, but to deny the positioning of particular events by any such agency and to discourage the fruitless search for such fatalistic laws. Though the term is used by Althusser

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13. *For Marx*, pp. 105n, 117f.

14. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works*, New York: International Publishers, 1968, pp. 692-4.

as a special structuralist category, it stays just as vague after Althusser's treatment though its original meaning is reversed.

Althusser has postulated that the global structure causes specific events to happen in specific places and times, rather than the widely held view that the multitude of events, always necessarily involving some creativity and freedom, move the process laws of the economic base at a rate for this reason nondeterminable a priori. Althusser's novel conception of the superstructure leaves him with the question of how it is that in Marxist causality so construed as a science of events, the economic base goes about its part in causing events, which are superstructural, without resorting back to a crude form of economic determinism of superstructure by base, i.e. economism.

Althusser says that the 'last instance' of economic determination does not mean that the economy comes along later, to supply the final ingredient after the superstructures--politics and ideology--are through, nor is the economic base responsible for the operation of the superstructure since the various superstructures Althusser says have an autonomy separate from the base. This is all the explanation we are given of determination in the last instance. Consequently, determination by the economy 'in the last instance' is left to indicate neologism 'as a last resort' by Althusser.

Althusser asserts that within the global structure there are four structures, called practices: economic, political, ideological, theoretical, which produce everything and claims, without further explanation, that most of this involves basic premises from

Mao Tse-Tung.[15] Having seen an attempt by Althusser to preserve a special role for the economy, what then of the other structures, how can they exist distinct from the economy and distinct from each other and yet all go about making specific events in space and time? Althusser uses the Marxist term 'relations of production' to mean the relations that all the structures have with each other within the global totality.[16] Althusser asserts relations of production on the authority that because it had a meaning for Marx it also has a place in Althusser's system, its presence to define away a difficulty: the mode of existence within which each structure has a separate existence and also relations with the other structures. Althusser comes up with a specialized category to handle the problem,'relative autonomy',[17] another term used by Engels vaguely to specify the relation of the superstructure as a whole to the base. Althusser uses it to mean that for each structure within the global totality, the degree of independence is determined by its degree of dependence. To the question of 'how', Althusser answers 'how much' by equivocating between the two points in question, independence and dependence, another answer by tautology:

> ...the mode and degree of <u>independence</u> of each time and history is therefore determined by the mode and degree of <u>dependence</u> of each level within the set of articulations of the whole.[18]

Althusser offers no nexus on which dependence/independence may be measured or even defined. Instead, he races ahead to sum the total

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15. For Marx, pp. 229, 253. Althusser claims these ideas are to be found in Mao Tse-Tung, <u>Selected Works</u>, Volume I, "On Practice" and "On Contradiction".

16. Ibid., pp. 83, 205.

17. <u>Reading Capital</u>, pp. 97, 99-100.

18. Ibid., pp. 100.

relations of dependence/independence into a dominance of one structure, a situation to be expressed by what he calls the 'overdetermined contradiction'.[19] Yet this term remains unclear because it presupposes, first of all, the relative autonomy of each distinct structure of production, which Althusser has only specified by tautology. Overdetermination and relative autonomy remain just as emply as determination in the last instance, one more part of the tissue paper woof and fabric of Althusser's novel science of an historical causation for events.

By overdetermination Althusser means that there is not one, principle contradiction in society but a complex fusion of various contradictions:

> ...the Capital-Labor contradiction is never simple, but always specified by the historically concrete forms and circumstances in which it is exercised.[20]

It is this particular fusion of contradictions which points to revolution, when there is:

> the accumulation and exacerbation of all the historical contradictions then possible in a single state.[21]

Althusser borrows examples from what Lenin called the 'uneven development' of Russia[22] to illustrate what Althusser refers to as the overdetermined contradiction of Russia: the huge Putilov factory vs. the medieval state of the countryside, the sharpening of the imperialist contradiction with the country plunged into the First World War, assistance extended to the Revolution by the Anglo-French bourgeoisie

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19. For Marx, "Contradiction and Overdetermination", pp. 87-129.

20. Ibid., p. 106

21. Ibid., pp. 95-6.

22. V.I. Lenin, "Our Revolution" in Selected Works Volume III, p. 821, quoted in For Marx, pp. 96f.

against the Tsar, and so on. In short, Russia was both feudal and modern at a time when everything was falling apart everywhere. The Russian ruling class could not handle the crisis and the outcome was Revolution.[23]

This commonsense truism of the eve of Revolution is to be found alike in anarchist writings[24] as in Lenin and one wonders how Althusser proposes to move from common sense historical description to scientifically demonstrating the nature and course of the Russian Revolution, and alternatively why Germany in the 1920's, with a much larger Communist party, went fascist. It is a long step from description of historical events to a science of those events as determined in their outcome by the relations of production. Althusser thinks the problem adequately solved by his notion of 'structural causality', wherein he rejects any cause of the events outside of and related to the events, such as the influence of the human factor or a relation between people, for Althusser has repeatedly said that people are but supports and in no way the cause of historical processes:

> ...that the whole existence of the structure consists of its effects, in short that the structure is merely a specific combination of its peculiar elements, is nothing outside its effects.[25]

Althusser's answer is circular, the problem imperilling the key concept for his science of events--overdetermination--which is to be both "determining, but also determined in one and the same movement".[26]

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23. Ibid., pp. 96-7.

24. Peter Kropotkin, "The Spirit of Revolt" in Kropotkin's Revolutionary Pamphlets. Edited by Roger N. Baldwin. New York: Dover Publications, 1970, pp. 37-8.

25. RC., p. 189.

26. FM., p. 101.

That Althusser's science is circular is demonstrated again and again; for example, the following quotation from his For Marx:

> ...the structure-in-dominance of the complex whole, this structural invariant, is itself the precondition for the concrete variations of the contradictions that constitute it...and inversely because this variation is the existence of that invariant.[27]

It is impossible to generate a logical set of dynamic relationships from this. The theorist, piercing through the various layers of causality, finds only the layers of the onion. What at one level is a cause then turns around to be effect. Given such a situation, the priveleged role of the theorist becomes apparent. K. R. Minogue observes that:

> there is something fishy about Althusser's use of the notion of 'relative autonomy' ...because it allows the theorist to assert a determination or a non-determination entirely at his convenience.[28]

Rather than performing a Herculean act of synthesis, the poverty of this self-contradictory task becomes the more obvious the closer we get to its actual historical application. By plastering over the distance for reason and freedom between the unity of theory and practice, Althusser claims that:

> ...there is no production in general, there is no history in general, but only specific structures of historicity, based in the last resort on the specific structures of the different modes of production.[29]

But if the very nature of any historical event cannot be ascertained

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27. Ibid., p. 213

28. K. R. Minogue, "Recent Discussions from Machiavelli to Althusser" in Political Studies, March 1975, p. 100.

29. RC., p. 107.

until the specific structure of the event is first elucidated, then the structural combination of the specific terms becomes the circular task of fixing these terms in the first place. In short, Althusser's science turns out to be metaphysical rather than scientific because, in fact and in logic, it provides nothing that would allow us to distinguish among different times and places to know anything about actual history. As soon as it tries to, as soon as it refers to any historical time and situation (ancient, feudal, modern, Russian Revolution, etc.), though it may refer to it as a specific structure of historicity, it still has done nothing more than to change the name of what had been defined, as within time, and as ideological effect, to the new name of specific structure. It has gone no higher than what it had defined as ideology, as history in general, except that the various effects thereby are granted a necessity and inevitability while cause is left undetected and unmastered. As Bertell Ollman puts it:

> Althusser's fundamental error lies in misusing the concept of structure in much the same way that Hegel misused the concept of idea; that is, a generalization based on examining many particular instances (in this case, various particular structures of the whole) is treated as an independentity, which is then used to determine the very parts that gave rise to it.[30]

Althusser's notion of structural causality, where the totality of effects is included as the totality of the structure, advances a naturalistic notion of historical determinism of the sort set up by Karl Popper as the straw man for his Poverty of Historicism and a model roundly criticized by Marcuse in his critique of Popper.

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30. Bertell Ollman, Alienation Marx's Conception of Man in Capitalist Society (Cambridge: University Press, 1971), pp. 266-7 note 41.

Marcuse's point is a:

> 'selective' analysis--one which focuses on the basic institutions and relations of a society (a distinction which must, of course, be demonstrated and justified logically as well as empirically).[31]

Marxist science gives only the global form of the ideology of capitalism: the type of need is for commodities; the logic is atomistic; the type of state is legal, contractarian, and based on property rights. At another level--the superstructural as the account of specific historical content within capitalism--are situated the social sciences. Thus, at the superstructural level where Althusser avowedly designates its arena of operation, "overdetermination" can do service as a social science concept comprising and contrasting cultural, political, and social antagonisms in revolutionary and pre-revolutionary situations. However, all metaphysical trappings of structural causality must first be removed since the necessity referred to by overdetermination is not preordained--as are the necessary laws of the base--within the revolutionary situation. Accompanying the removal of metaphysics is the imperative that individuals assume the role of subjects of history: by acting collectively when affected collectively, in the superstructure as in the base, making requisite structural changes in society to promote human happiness and wellbeing. The point, however, is to go beyond superstructural to radical social change, then "the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed."[32]

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31. Herbert Marcuse, "Karl Popper and the Problem of Historical Laws" in Studies in Critical Philosophy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972NLB), p. 201. See also Karl R. Popper, The Poverty of Historicism (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957).

32. Karl Marx, "Preface to the Critique of Political Economy" in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Selected Works (New York: International Publishers, 1969), p. 183.

Ollman accuses Althusser of seeking support in a stretched translation of Marx:

> Althusser has in fact confused structure with complexity, so that when Marx speaks of the social whole as an 'already given concrete and living aggregate' (schon gegeben konkreten, lebendigen Ganzen)...Althusser paraphrases this as a 'complex, structured, already given whole'...The transition, apparently slight but possessing serious ramifications, from the idea of complexity to that of structure, has no basis in Marx's text.[33]

The mysterious concept 'relative autonomy' is left to govern the inter-relation of elements which, as the 'overdetermined contradiction', are to be only understood as the structure they all add up to. The hidden functioning of this concept that assures the revolution is also assigned the responsibility, we shall later see, of ensuring the relation of the scientificity of Althusser's discourse to the historical events it is to be the knowledge of. Thus relative autonomy has a functioning that is always totally metaphysical.

Having seen an attempt by Althusser to explain the inter-relation of structures, what of each individual structure? How can it be a separate structure and what happens within it? Althusser answers this by another new term, 'Generalities I, II, III', this time totally his own, which is to explain why each structure may also be called a practice:

> By practice in general I shall mean any process of <u>transformation</u> of a determinate given raw material into a determinate <u>product</u>, a transformation effected

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33. Ollman, p. cit. p. 7.

> by a determinate human labor, using determinate means (of "production").[34]

Generality I is the raw material, Generality II is the means of production, and Generality III is the finished product. Under the fancy name of Generalities, this looks like nothing more than a dictionary definition of work. If it were only to saw that men make things from raw materials with tools, we could have no dispute with Althusser over such a truism. Nor could this simple category bring Althusser any closer to achieving the objectives he has set for science. The rigid historical causality with which his science is to deal is here introduced by a reshuffling of the terms. Man as thinking and creating factor of production is replaced in this role by a structural feature to be common to each of the four structures:

> In each practice thus conceived, the <u>determinate</u> moment (or element) is neither the raw material nor the product, but the practice in the narrow sense: the moment of the <u>labor of transformation</u> itself, which sets to work, in a specific structure, men, means and a technical method of utilizing the means.[35]

> The determinate moment in each practice is the work of production which brings together raw materials, men and means of production--<u>not</u> the men who perform the work, who cannot therefore claim to be subjects of the historical process.[36]

These declarations issue forth like statements of fact. On what basis does Althusser make his shuffle?

Support for this bureaucratization of intelligence, imagination and feeling Althusser claims to take directly from Karl Marx. The attribution of this notion to Marx involves the final element of

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34. <u>For Marx</u>, p. 166.

35. Ibid., p. 166-7.

36. Ibid., p. 253

Althusserian style to be examined: showy translation of simple German words whose meanings are stretched in order to arrive at grand structuralist proclamations.

TENDENTIOUS TRANSLATION of GERMAN

For example, Althusser claims evidence from Marx that people's awareness is set in motion by a knowledge structure. In a moment we shall see how from this Althusser redraws the base/superstructure distinction. In our example, Althusser translates the words: 'legitimate', 'in reality', 'product', 'thinking', conceiving' back into the German yet which remain just as ordinary in German as when translated in the quotation Althusser takes from Marx:

> It is therefore perfectly legitimate (richtig) to say, as Marx does, that "the concrete-totality as a thought-totality, as a thought-concrete, is in reality (in der Tat) a product of thinking and conceiving (ein Produkt des Denkens, des Begreifens)"...[37]

Althusser says it is perfectly legitimate and furthermore richtig to take from the Marx quote Marx's general term "product of thinking and conceiving" as affirmation of Althusser's specific thesis that people's thoughts are set in motion by the determinate structure of production of knowledge. The German 'in der Tat' means 'indeed', Althusser uses the synonym 'in reality' to designate thinking and conceiving as being separate and realively autonomous structures of production that, together with the economic and political, make up the four part structure of

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37. Reading Capital, p. 42, the quotation is from Karl Marx, Grundrisse der Kritik der Politischen Okonomie, Berlin, 1953, p. 22.

social reality:

> Once it is accepted that this is how 'thought'--the very general term Marx used in the passage we are analyzing--must be defined, it is perfectly legitimate to say that the production of knowledge which is peculiar to theoretical practice constitutes a process that takes place entirely in thought, just as we can say, mutatis mutandis, that the process of economic production takes place entirely in the economy...[38]

The above declaration, obtained through vigorously tendential translation of Marx, is central to Althusser's whole project for it contains both the notion of the relative autonomy of theory from reality once history--as temporal co-unity of theory to practice--is abolished as ideological illusion, as well as the notion of relatively autonomous practices in separate times. And we have indicated the contradictions that position is fraught with. We now examine Althusser's declaration as to the way it stands to Marx's treatment of the problem of the inadequacy of Cartesian reason, showing also the inadequacy of the structuralist alternative and how Marx's solution to the problem for the Cartesians is as well a solution to the problem besetting Althusser. Therefore we now leave behind the overview of the practice of Althusser's dogmatic theory and his dogmatic theory construction to consider the unsolved problems his theory construction is attempting to grapple with.

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38. RC., p. 42.

C H A P T E R III

BASE AND SUPERSTRUCTURE. POLITICAL RAMIFICATIONS OF THE IDEALISM IN THE NOTION OF THE PRODUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE.

Like a last bastille of the mystery of existence
Its blind approaches baffle us, Steep paths plunge
Nowhere from it, Roads radiate into air like the
Labyrinth wires of a telephone central thru which
All calls are infinitely untraceable....
We ogle the unobtainable imagined mystery, Yet away
Around on the far side like the stage door of a
Circus tent is a wide vent in the battlements where
Even elephants waltz thru.

Ferlinghetti, A Coney Island of the Mind.

In Chapter I, we specified what it was that Althusser sets out by rejecting: Cartesian causality. Althusser wants to discover the mode of causality, or determination, operating within a 'deep space' beyond and outside the linear, Cartesian space. But the deep space referred to by Althusser is by no means to be later linked to a deepening of the rule of reason capable of reforging the unity of theory and practice that became progressively sundered in the late bourgeois period. For Althusser, the deep space only comes into existence after a closing over of the distance between theory and practice, after the advent of 'theoretical practice', and the disappearance of radical human freedom from the picture. Behind Althusser's forced translation of Marx, we find the fundamental tenet of recent structural analysis--to be examined herein shortly--and for which Althusser's tendentious translation has attempted to enlist Marx's endorsation.

In this chapter, we take up some lines of criticism begun in the preceding chapter, showing that the structural solution fails because, ultimately, the problems riding Althusser's treatment are the very problems he sets out to solve. It is the existence of a problem which we simply label here as the "transcendental problem": the logical possibility of an infinite regression flowing from the structural nature of the postulated form of the deep determinism. The failure of Althusser's solution to the problem of 'deep space' conceals, confuses and blocks transcendence to a higher stage of reason and a more just social order, turning into a naturalistic justification of existing servitude; for all the dialectical jargon thereby sitting well within the positivist tradition.

The structuralist tenet which Althusser has endorsed may be summarized as including both an epistemological premise and its implication for the historical process; according to Robert d'Amico 1) the concept of the unconscious and 2) the critique of linear, teleological history:

> First, the unconscious represents not merely the sum of activities that lie beyond our awareness but the fact that the whole of interpretative or active forms of behavior are already mediated and structured. If the raising of consciousness means the hope for some vantage point in which consciousness can grasp its object in such a way that there is an identity between activity and knowledge, then that is an illusion, by the very nature of consciousness.
> Second, the linearity of history, which has dominated Western thought, is displaced to historical depth not characterized by increasing productivity, increasing rationality or progress. Rather, one discovers survivals, cyclical returns, changes that are non-simultaneous, and the weight of a "mass history" over man's conscious understanding.[1]

According to K. R. Minogue:

> A structuralist is someone who explains a whole area (ensemble, totalite, etc.) of human life in terms of the operation of certain key elements, logically related to each other, and only accessible by 'rigorous' theorizing.[2]

What is crucial is the fact of the hidden operation of the certain key elements which account for human life, and which are accessable only to the theorist rather than as also objects for the conscious will of the individual actor. As Miriam Glucksman puts it, no matter how meticulous the scrutiny of the facts: the "structure is not to be

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1. Robert d'Amico, "The Contours and Coupures of Structuralist Theory" in TELOS #17, p. 82.

2. K. R. Minogue, "Recent Discussions from Machiabelli to Althusser" in Political Studies, March 1975, p. 98.

found by observation".[3]

Thus the advent of theoretical practice marks a break in the connection of knowledge, action and freedom.

Within the production of knowledge, ideology is the inferior structure, above it is theoretical practice. Althusser's notion of structural relative autonomy goes against the empiricist demand for evidence from the economic and political reality when determining the truth-falsity of a propostion about reality. Instead, within these two structures of production, ideology and theory, people's thoughts are set in motion by the structure and follow a necessary course.

Althusser's structuralist premises divide off a select group of intellectuals from the masses, who live indeological practice. Althusser and his select circle live in theoretical practice, while only they can go up and down at will between theory and ideology. Thus the revolution happened just then, just there, because the masses were thinking just what they were supposed to, just when they were supposed to, because they are controlled by the ideology structure of the party, which also translates the science that in turn controls it. Althusser and his party will be right since Althusser's Marxism is scientific because of its scientificity, which is to say, its scientific location as an event in the four-fold production of reality. His theory, he claims, is an objective event.

> This system of theoretical production...has a determinate objective reality. This determinate reality is what defines the roles and functions of the 'thought' of particular individuals...hence

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3. Miriam Glucksman, Structural Analysis in Contemporary Social Thought. A Comparison of the Theories of Claude Levi-Strauss and Louis Althusser, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), p. 42.

> it is also what sets to work their 'thought power' as the structure of an economic mode of production sets to work the labour power of its immediate producer...[4]

It is appropriate to refer here to Georg Lukacs as he spells out the problem of the legendary Indian critic who was confronted with:

> the ancient story according to which the world rests upon an elephant. He unleashed the critical question: upon what does the elephant rest? On receiving the answer that the elephant stands upon a tortoise criticism declared itself satisfied. It is obvious that even if he had continued to press apparently critical questions, he could only have solicited a third miraculous animal.[5]

In his article, "Althusser on History without Man", Mark Poster makes the same observation:

> One could claim that discourse was a system like all others and therefore it did not depend on subjects who were only its bearers...[6]

In other words, if theory is just as set in motion by the structure as is the economic, and as is ideology, Althusser has only transported the transcendental problem intact to another level where, holding it over others, he sees it hovering over himself. How then is the real to be attained by science without being its object of knowledge:

> ---except by presupposing some more secret correspondance between a theory and its object? This underlying correspondence, everywhere present, is never theorized. It is mentioned once vis-a-vis the modes of production: "we can set out the 'presuppositions' for the theoretical knowledge of them, which are quite simply the concepts of the conditions of their historical

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4. Louis Althusser and Etienne Balibar, Reading Capital, (London: New Left Books, 1970), p. 182. Hereinafter referred to as RC.

5. Georg Lukacs, History and Class Consciousness, (London: Merlin Press, 1971), p. 110.

6. Mark Poster, "Althusser On History Without Man" in Political Theory, November, 1974, p. 405.

> existence". The simplicity of this 'quite simply' announces the transcendental correlation whose law was formulated by Kant: the conditions of the possibility of experience in general are at the same time the conditions of the possibility of the objects of experience...While Kant explored his 'at the same time', the critical question par excellence, Althusser's 'quite simply' translates the transcendental zugleich only to obliterate the problem as soon as it appears.[7]

In political education, if one can become aware of the social sources of one's thinking and thereby free oneself to make one's own decisive plans according to the situation, then in this sense one can become free from ideology. But by the very operation of Althusser's structuralist tenet and the ponderous mechanisms of thought control it contains, this becomes a formal impossibility. Althusser maintains the concept of the unconscious in its heirarchical, manipulative form as the very possibility of all conscious thinking, and instead attempts to cut to ever deeper levels of the unconscious. Science is to probe the unconscious of ideology and determine the passage of events. Science rises up and out of the superstructure and out of the social domination of thought limited to the immediate turning of events in a world structurally, rather than humanly, determined. The unconscious of science is to be given by Althusser's Marxist philosophy of science, a sweeping theory of all theories, which is to provide the special categories that ground the science and which were examined in Chapter I above.

We see at this height the most sublime and the most ridiculous together in Althusser's brand of determinism found in theoretical

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7. Andre Glucksman, "A Ventriloquist Structuralism" in New Left Review, #72, p. 74.

practice as in the rest of his structural causality. When Althusser puts forward his theory of theories, claiming that "the presuppositions for theoretical knowledge are quite simply the concepts of the conditions of their historical existence", he means that in a totally determined world, to be able to say certain conditions are the theoretical conditions for true theory means that the theory is thereby true, is not ideology, and has retrieved its theoretical foundations. In other words, theory has given the mode of the domination that dominates it, a mode only visible to theoretical practice while common as the mode of domination of all structural causality. According to Althusser, the problem of the cognitive appropriation of the real object by the object of knowledge:

> is a special case of the appropriation of the real world by different practices...

and, as we are elsewhere told, theoretical practice:

> is founded on and articulated to the existing economic, political and ideological practices which directly or indirectly provide it with the essentials of its 'raw' materials...[8]

Therefore, as another practice totally set in motion by the structure of production governing it, the only way that specific scientific content of theoretical practice hooks up to reality is unconsciously and spontaneously (i.e., we have faith that it does), a situation described in the vague concept relative autonomy and in the following contradictory manner. Although theory is claimed to rise up and out of the superstructure, thereby to escape the social domination of thought

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8. RC., p. 66; Ibid., p. 42.

which befalls ideology, the more theory is dominated by the other structures of social reality, the more does domination decrease autonomy and, by working through the science's subconscious, ensure that truth is produced. It is apparent, however, that to name the mode of domination is not to end or avert the domination inherent in a realm of thought that, like everything else, is directly and indirectly set in motion by structures. For the slave to know the master's name is not to end the rule of the master's will over the life and fate of the slave.

Given the fact of hidden domination affirmed by Althusser's 'theory of theories', his system is left with the problem of fitting into the same global structure both relations of production and specific events, in short, the problem of where and how to draw the base/superstructure distinction. And for Althusser's scientific and philosophical truths to consist of theoretical events there is, in the line between event and its structure of production, the same reliance on a base/superstructure distinction. I shall show that Althusser's formal epistemological solution drives him into idealism where he finally gives up trying to maintain a base/superstructure distinction and accordingly never does get outside of what Marx called the superstructure.

It may be recalled that Althusser first pulled up short of granting an egalitarian, pluralistic relation among the practices with the economy structure to be 'determinate in the last instance".

Althusser was then stuck in the quandary of trying to maintain a base/superstructure distinction, with a role for the economy in the base that escapes economism and allows as well as role for the superstructure, within the closed horizon of scientifically determinable events seen only when they break by the mass consciousness which only

has access to the superstructure.

In classical Marxist theory the superstructure is the domain of reality of which we are all immediately conscious, consisting in various ideologies, religions, visible economic processes and political occurrences, and so on. Behind the superstructure is the base, the general historical ground that life is based on and extends as the general and orderly flow of things of which we are seldom aware. By making of ideology a perceptual as well as normative category within which all individual and mass consciousnesses are to be placed, Althusser ends up categorizing consciousness as one separate region of the very superstructure all of which it is supposed to have access to. It is here that Althusser stops trying rationally to articulate a base/superstructure distinction for an idealist solution. Political events occur within the political, just as ideological events for consciousness occur within ideology and economic events within the economy--and superstructural events cease to be superstructural. Each structure has its own events subterraneously influenced by all the other structures through its relative autonomy. Equally, the scientificity of Althusser's science means that it is in no need of verification as a totally determined event within theoretical practice.

Just as events were not to be caused by the economy and Marist science not to be an economism, Althusser's own structuralist contribution, the structure of production of knowledge, moves into front and center importance, It too is not superstructural. Althusser replaces the economy and economism with theoretical practice and idealism, the world as spontaneous creation of mind. A few intellectuals, living in theoretical practice, a relatively autonomous structure of production of knowledge, produce the categories

and their combinations which in turn produce the world of events that is to be beheld in the supposed linear flow of mass consciousness. This is the idealism of science. Althusser never directly answers the question of how science is now to be capable of producing adequate knowledge within the order of thought (except by asserting the scientificity, theoretical practice as its own criterion) while the object it works on is ideology and its own object produced is still not the real order outside of thought.

Chapter I concluded by pointing to the political effects of closing over the distance for freedom between theory and practice: stagnation and deterioration while running in circles. There is no meaningful role for the exercise of freedom when the laws of the social object remain beyond the understanding. The only consolation is to march in brotherhood to our destruction; a fey and nonrational gratification of the emerging need for community. Althusser's structural causality ends in this wild goose chase. We are offered, in the words of the bard, " a tale told full of sound and fury, signifying nothing". While being critically aware that the course of history is not directed by Cartesian mechanics, yet also affirming hidden domination and thereby not leaving the problem i.e. not leaving the superstructure, Althusser never gets to the level of reason capable of understanding and directing those laws. History naturally appears as an independent specter that causes itself-- 'the presence of the structure in its effects'.

Althusser's analysis never does leave the superstructure, the only place a subconsciousness of blind domination can have any meaning. After the advent of Marxist science, ideology is to be both recognized and overcome at the rebirth of freedom. But all Althusser really had proposed to do is to organize arbitrarily events that everyone knows

about into some thin, very general categories, which are then portrayed in a purely circular manner as structures which cause themselves and all the world. Overdetermination is only the pretentious treatment of commonplace uneven development, a fact we can be sure of in advance when considering different units.

Althusser's attempt fails to get to the roots of domination, a failure expressed in his own theory as the unsolved transcendental problem. This signal failure, I submit, is expressed in the sad ritual of the intellectual who displaces and projects his own self-hatred from the experience of his own impotence onto humanity in general, diffusing and generalizing as a universal ontological condition the domination philosophy has not overcome.

Cartesian reason marked precisely a liberation from transcendental domination by the grey unmoved mover, a domination which returns again with Althusser. Descartes overthrew thranscendental domination by occupying, with the Cartesian method, the heretofore hidden realm, consciously articulating a methodical logic common also to the ordering of the physical world. It was a material as well as a spiritual liberation because subjective human needs and the objective means of satisfying them, in short: commodities, could be directly plugged into the logic. Through reason man could become at home in the physical world, for the first time, as "masters and possessors of nature" rather than being continually stricken and fleeing in terror from the apparently arbitrary oppression of demons and hobgoblins. When Descartes claimed that the mind was infinite and unextended, he meant that by using logic and acting on the light of knowledge to satisfy the needs which man could name, the spiritually pure agent of

reason is thereby himself a wielder, by his own decision and will, of the infinite spirit of God translated into a finite historical setting.

Our task in this century is to understand the motion of the mass history propelled by the individual decisions of possessively self-directed individuals. Althusser's own individualistic solution to the transcendental problem, where science works upon the ideologies thought by the masses, turns out to be a non-solution. It is a non-solution for the many reasons already given, the most important reason being that the concept of the unconscious can be enlightening only if what was formerly unconscious can be brought into consciousness, judged, purged, adjusted or realigned. This was the very mission of Freudian psychoanalysis when it first proposed the category of the suboonscious. According to Wilhelm Reich:

> Freud distinguished between three systems in the psychological apparatus: the conscious, comprising the perceptive function of the sensory apparatus and all feelings and ideas that are actually conscious; the pre-conscious, including all those ideas and attitudes which are not within the conscious at a particular moment but which can become conscious at anytime...and the unconscious, Freud's real discovery, which is characterized by the fact that its contents cannot become conscious because censorship is nothing mystical but includes rules and prohibitions taken over from the outside world.[9]

Marxist science deals with the process laws of the base in human labor as evolution of the social forces of production. The limbo region between base and superstructure designated for the economic by Althusser is indeed symptomatic. He demonstrates no knowledge of these laws in

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9. Wilhelm Reich, Dialectical Materialism and Psychoanalysis London: Socialist Reproduction, 1972), p. 25.

their singular feature most crucial to a science of our times: as laws of a process proceeding out of existence. Althusser would then know that men not only encounter events, they also make them and must once again learn to make them consciously. The only real solution is a deepening of reason capable of understanding and overcoming the structure of domination before the system of domination collapses on our heads, dragging all down like the fall of Rome. Liberation becomes a possibility, in Reich's words:

> ...by obtaining insight into the repressed matter within--i.e. by the unconscious being made conscious.[10]

Once we know how, once the general principles for liberation have been laid down, liberation then involves the personal growth of the individual. In that case, what may first only have been discovered by the few then can, and moreover must be discovered and wielded by all. The logic capable of driving forward this liberation: dialectics; the driving need: community.

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10. Ibid., p. 29.

CHAPTER IV

IDEOLOGY AND SCIENCE.

History: it had stolen our youth....We were brutally cast into the Party's great political and ideological battles: we had to measure up to our choice and take the consequences.

In this area there is perhaps no greater joy than to be able to witness in an emerging life, once the Gods of Origins and Goals have been dethroned, the birth of necessity.

Louis Althusser.

But when I see the others sacrifice pleasures, repose, wealth, power, and life itself for the preservation of this sole good which is so disdained by those who have lost it; when I see animals born free and despising captivity break their heads against the bars of their prison; when I see multitudes of entirely naked savages scorn European voluptousness and endure hunger, fire, the sword, and death to preserve only their independence, I feel that it does not behoove slaves to reason about freedom.

Jean Jacques Rousseau.

In this chapter, we shall focus on the contrast between Marx and Althusser with respect to their differing notions of ideology and class struggle, as seen in their differing conceptions of the subconscious. The main characteristic of Althusser's whole theory is his novel conception of superstructural relative autonomy. It finds expression in his conception of the subconscious as ontological category--the independence of the superstructure both from the base and from the people entrapped within it. Althusser's conception of the eternality and historical independence of the category of ideology could hardly be a more exact ideological portrayal of the state of affairs described by Marx's concept of alienation.

I shall show that for Marx, the revolutionary project means precisely a conscious and critical opposition to unconsciously accepted tenets that thrived in a previously noncritical subconscious. By subconscious we shall mean anything accepted as metaphysical, natural and inevitable, outside the realm of decision and change, which a higher stage of consciousness and possibility has revealed to be political. A theory of revolution situates itself on the parameters of the social system. Hobbes' and Machiavelli's demystifications of the medieval world view are of interest here for they revealed as artifical the constants within which it was held that the world changed.[1] When Machiavelli denounced the metaphysical notion of divine authority in hereditary rulership, his concern was not only philosophical but practical. The most crucial variables were precisely the ones that had been frozen within the old weltanschauung.

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1. Machiavelli, Discourses II, xxiii.

According to Lukacs, such a total confrontation with society occurred before a new society could be founded on new needs and values, the latter of which Herbert Marcuse has referred to as the "transvaluation of values."[6] Althusser's subconsciousness of ideology is left to rule, as an eternal metaphysic, the murky normative area of interests, needs, wants, desires. It is precisely this area which today must become conscious and political, susceptible to analysis, to change and human self-changing because Lukacs was right. It is becoming a matter of life and death.

An index of Althusser's alienation is his claim that characteristic of the mature Marx was a change in the object of political economy away from human needs and values, which Marx no longer held to propel the economic system.[7]

Althusser is mistaken in several ways. Marx claimed, just as wholeheartedly in 1844 as in Capital, that individuals were subject to anonymous laws that functioned independently of their will. Wage-slavery for the manufacture and purchase of products that can be given an exchange-value and sold through the market place can never, by the very structure of the competitive market including the labor market, produce a commodity to satisfy the need for community, nor the need to be freely creative with one's time, abilities and available resources. And periodically occuring crises are the natural condition of the system. When Althusser heralds as great scientific truth that human needs do not propel the capitalist system, he is defining

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6. Herbert Marcuse, An Essay On Liberation. Boston: Beacon Press, 1971, p. 20.

7. Reading Capital, pp. 159ff.

The examination of such variables Paulo Freire has called dialectical knowledge.[2] The oppressed must:

> transcend their 'culture of silence' and become able to name their world, instead of continuing to allow their oppressors to label their reality for them.

Attempts are made to:

> transform habitual patterns of domination, or habitual acceptance of justifications of domination, into problems that can be discussed, names and comprehended in terms that make it possible to devise realistic strategies in working for revolutionary changes.[3]

What is required is an intellectual and spiritual confrontation with what Meszaros has called the "second order mediations".[4] When intellectual scrutiny is reserved not only for conducting the routine tasks within socially required and accepted behavior but directed against the basic social parameters of behavior, a fundamental change of doing becomes possible that turns into a change of being. According to Lukacs, capitalism is the first social order producing a class to accomplish this mission:

> The discovery of the class-outlook of the proletariat provided a vantage point from which to survey the whole of society. This was only possible because for the proletariat the total knowledge of its class situation was a vital necessity, a matter of life and death; because its class situation becomes comprehensible only if the whole of society can be understood; and because this understanding is the inescapable precondition of its actions.[5]

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2. See especially Pedagogy of the Oppressed. New York: Seabury, 1974.

3. Christian Bay, Access to Political Knowledge as a Human Right. University of Toronto, Department of Political Economy, Oct., 1974.

4. Istvan Meszaros, Marx's Theory of Alienation. London: Merlin Press, 1970, p. 109.

5. Georg Lukacs, History and Class Consciousness. London: Merlin Press, 1971, p. 20.

a problem of capitalism most endemic to a certain stage of capitalist evolution, which his structuralism treats as a universal human condition enduring for all time.

Marx has said that the social relations of production do develop the social forces of production for a time, then they become fetters. This simply means that after a certain time capitalism increasingly no longer does the one thing it originally could: produce products to satisfy those needs capable of being satisfied by commodities. Developing ever new products in the constant search for private profit, a continually shrinking number of capitalists continue to benefit by an increasingly outdated criterion of success. On the other side are the swelling ranks of those who never made it as leaders of industry and have had to find a place among the oppressed on whose labor power the process is propelled along. With growing wealth, a continued life in captivity as a wage slave may seem increasingly unattractive, the wastage of scarce resources and the ecological damages increasingly tragic and unecessary, the debilitating societal competition for power over others and for the material trappings of an empty life increasingly shallow and inhuman. When society based on continual competition yields monopoly-oligopoly and a massive class of wage earners, power inequalities can only be overthrown at the source. Then the one enormous class upon whom the source depends realizes it no longer has to go along with things, that it has nothing to gain from the continued game of social competition and everything to gain by building a new system founded on cooperation and solidarity. The capitalist organization of society into a giant marketplace laid the basis for a

whole new humanity:

> Bourgeois society carried out the process of socialising society. Capitalism destroyed both the spatio-temporal barriers between different land and territories and also the legal partitions between the different 'estates' (Stande). In its universe there is a formal equality for all men; the economic relations that directly determined the metabolic exchange between men and nature progressively disappear. Man becomes, in the true sense of the word, a social being. Society becomes the reality for man.[8]

After a long period of capitalist development, a new social task arises after the all-out production and consumption of commodities--socialization of existing social relations of production in the widest possible sense as production for the satisfaction of society's needs and the conscious productive construction of society as satisfaction of the vital need for community. Revolutionary new social relations of production appear, a new pattern of social interaction is created. When the business of gathering together society is no longer left to the unconsciously accepted economic necessity of homo homini lupus, social forces and relations of production coincide, no longer contradictory, in the full social consciousness of the only social class. For Marx, bourgeois subconsciousness is overthrown when its contradictions become known and are pitted against by the class aware of the possibility, within its class base, for overthrowing the contradictions. Marx's conquest of the subconscious masked by the bourgeois ideology was for one purpose only: to rip the mask off the face of oppression.

According to Marx, the class struggle is first largely unconscious, which state of oppression he calls ideology. For Marxism, the subconscious is not the infinite epistemological regress of a bottomless

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8. Lukacs, Op. cit., p. 19.

pit as it appears from Althusser's treatment. True, the economy and the state apparatus seem to exist separately and independently through rights of their own, rights that seem to impartially preserve and protect the rights of all. Still, social wealth and power is held in the tightening grip of an ever decreasing sector of the population. The path to consciousness of the formerly unconscious is, however, a rational process. The whole bourgeois superstructure ceases to be an unconsciously operating class tool with the recognition by labor of its own underground, alienated nature standing before it, the recognition that labor has all along directly produced the existence of its own oppressors and indirectly its own oppression. Oppression proceeded through the laws protecting the free wage contract and private property, made by a once hegemonic class, who are in turn made by labor.

> "Proudhon's phrase "le capital vaut, le travail produit" means absolutely nothing more than: capital is value, and since nothing further is here said about capital other than that it is value, that value is value (the subject of the judgement is here only another name for the predicate); and labour produces, is productive labour, i.e. labour is labour, since it is precisely nothing apart from "produire". It must be obvious that these identical judgements do not contain any particular deep wisdom, and that above all, they cannot express a relation in which value and labour enter into connection, in which they connect and divide in relation to one another, and where they do not lie side by side in mutual indifference. Already the fact that it is labour which confronts capital as subject, i.e. the worker only in his character as labour, and not he himself, should open the eyes. This alone, disregarding capital, already contains a relation, a relation of the worker to his own activity, which is by no means the 'natural' one, but which itself already contains a specific economic character.". 9

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9. Karl Marx, Grundrisse, Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy. Translated by Martin Nicolau, Middlesex: Pelican Books, 1973, pp. 309-310.

In the 1844 Manuscripts, Marx recognized in Hegel's master-servant dialectic both the knowledge of servitude as the real truth of domination and the actual nature of all class societies, and that:

> the authority of the lord is in the last analysis dependent on the servant who believes in it and sustains it.[10]

Ideology appears originally to have a life of its own and Althusser, like the bourgeois ideologists, has not penetrated beyond appearance. Ideology is really part of the servant, the concealed and hidden part, his own subconsciousness, and the initiator of his behavior to the extent its guidelines and rationalizations for behavior remain tacitly accepted. It is representative of the concealed fact that oppression is the result of the servant's own activity. The overcoming of ideology, which points away from servitude and oppression, means a fuller and higher human development. For Marx, subconscious means unconscious where subconscious becomes, at a higher historical stage, class consciousness.

In one of his most recent public statements, Althusser claims that it is the class struggle, and not Sartre's man en situation, i.e. not concrete historical man, which propels history:

> History is an immense natural-human system in movement, and the motor of history is the class struggle. History is a process, and a process without a subject.[11]

Althusser eternalizes alienation and appears unable even to hope for an end to class society. He is of course correct to the extent that he exposes possible bourgeois uses of the concept of man in situation

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10. Herbert Marcuse, Studies in Critical Philosophy. Boston: Beacon Press, 1972 (German Manuscript 1932 in Die Gesellschaft), p. 109.

11. Louis Althusser, "Reply to John Lewis" in Marxism Today, October, 1972, pp. 315-6.

and his alienation, where questions of superstructure and the still subconscious class situation are glossed over in the petty though real angst of the bourgeois individualist. Yet Althusser throws the baby out with the water when he renounces concrete historical man from the scale altogether. It remains to be asked: if the class struggle propels history, what propels the class struggle? Answer: man en situation. What will be left after the domination of man by man--the class struggle--is ended? Answer: man en situation, but in a social rather than mutually predatory context. Althusser's claim, countenancing his structuralism, that belief systems often assume independent life and instead of changing when they become outdated, become springs of historical change, was fully recognized by Marx when he said that "the tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living". [12] Althusser treats as the great law of uneven development, expressed in his "overdetermination", that a revolution:

> does not ipso facto modify the existing superstructures and particularly the ideologies at one blow...for they have sufficient of their own consistency to survive beyond their immediate life context, even to recreate, to 'secrete' substitute conditions of existence temporarily; that the new society produced by the Revolution may itself ensure the survival, that is, the reactivation of older elements...[13]

According to Marx, revolution is no independent category, nor does it do or ensure anything ipso facto and by itself, nor do ideologies possess their own consistency, although in alienation it appears that way.

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12. Karl Marx, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte" in Selected Works, op. cit., p. 95.

13. For Marx, pp. 115-6.

What is real is the fight to overcome illusion and with it the continued survival of domination behind its various guises. Marx spoke of pre-history, viz. all history preceding communism, as being tragedy, its repetition as farce:

> And just when they seem engaged in revolutionizing themselves and things, in creating something that has never yet existed, precisely in such periods of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service and borrow from them names, battle cries and costumes in order to present the new scene of world history in this time-honoured disguise and this borrowed language.[14]

What is real is the "engaged in revolutionizing themselves" in the long historical fight against domination and its many disguises, with setbacks and advances. Domination is yet to be overcome.

Nowhere in Althusser's supposedly rigorous view of things are we given any scientific knowledge of domination. This absence is telling for Althusser has rejected any humanism of science. Humanism is depicted as one ideology among others. Althusser's 'theoretical anti-humanism' embraces totally a faith in the rigors of science for depicting the fated unfolding of the world's events, science in turn to be governed by absolute philosophical precision in its terminology. Similar to American behaviorism in its less sophisticated forms, a crisis in reason and freedom in thereby "concealed by a ritual which calls itself methodology or logic". Leo Strauss adds that one could hardly call such a position Neronian.

> Nevertheless, one may say of it that it fiddles while Rome burns. It is excused by two facts: it does not

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14. Eighteenth Brumaire, p. 95.

> know that it fiddles, and it does not know that Rome burns.[15]

All of Althusser's theory presupposes totalitarian domination by the several structures of history; accordingly the individual, the theorist equally as one of the masses, is portrayed as no more than a brittle leaf swept along in the harsh winds of history's autumn. Althusser never does solve the 'transcendental problem' of an external domination that has penetrated one's own psyche. Althusser never shows how one may be united again within oneself, conscious or one's need and the means of their procurement. This unsolved problem is expressed in Althusser's theory as the failure to coherently draw the base / superstructure distinction. Consequently, Althusser's own theory seems haunted by external forces. Chapters I and II of the Thesis showed the poverty in Althusser's exercise in science: its inability to distinguish among the specific events it wishes to know and its broad framing of historical forces unmastered by man.

Althusser prided himself with having escaped the "centered totality" for his own "decentered totality". In the latter, various overdetermined structures legislate the course of events behind the backs of the masses. This is a crucial point. Mass consciousness is perpetually confined to but one of the structures: to ideological consciousness. Thus, along with the decentered totality we are offered decentered people. According to Althusser, alienated, anomic individuals must be so because of the eternal structure of reality, in principle unable to ever wear at their heart's centre the human

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15. Leo Strauss in Ellis Sandoz, "The Philosophical Science of Politics Beyond Behaviorism" in George Graham and George Carey Editors, The Post-Behavioral Era (New York: David McKay Company Inc., 1972), p. 289.

sword and flame of their time, consciously willing and contesting the outcome of the great issues and events upon which history turns. As E. F. Schumacher puts it:

> The disease having been caused by allowing cleverness to displace wisdom, no amount of clever research is likely to produce a cure.[16]

Where there is science and philosophy produceable only by a minority in a world without a centre, (we have throughout depicted reason as undialectical, within each epoch) where individuals lack a centre of their being and are devoid of wisdom, Althusserian individuals become cannon fodder, to be externally led and totally dominated by the party for there is no light in them. Althusser's homage to an eternal subconscious that shapes him ends up, characteristically, in a frightening paean to bureaucracy and domination:

> It is clear that ideology (as a system of mass representations) is indispensable in any society is men are to be formed, transformed and equipped to respond to the demands of their conditions of existence...men must be ceaselessly transformed so as to adapt them to these conditions: if this adaptation can not be left to spontaneity but must be constantly assumed, dominated and controlled, it is in ideology that this demand is expressed...[17]

In the first part of the present chapter, we showed, in rough outline, that the transcendental problem is historical and soluble when the external oppression of individuals is seen as the alienated product of their own activities as a class. We conclude this chapter with a resume of this position.

The dimension Marx opens up for analysis is the subconscious,

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16. E. F. Schumacher, Small is Beautiful A Study of Economics as if People Mattered (London: Sphere Books, 1973 Schumacher), p. 30.

17. F.M., p. 235.

portraying it as an alienated social dimension. The laws of commodity production terminate in a decline of individual reason and freedom, in the classical and the Cartesian sense, as the commodity world grows.

Marx shows the social base behind the personal identities of atomistic individuals who have been labelled losers. Individuals will never be seen as inherently valuable, nor a world of victims and losers ended, as long as social men are judged, within the atomistic perspective of a social system of commodity production, according to individual commodity possession. Once the identity of individuals is seen as deriving, at least in part, from the process laws of society, individual identity can not be restored by the action of a solitary individual. An identity deriving from society can only be changed by social change. Social change can only occur as an action of society as a whole. But isolated men do not yet have a society. They must create it and, at the same time, a new, social, identity. What does it mean for individuals to collectively create a social identity? The key is that society is for the first time consciously created, which presupposes the fulfillment of a need. The need is to overcome the basic sense of loneliness and isolation surrounding an individual in his social environment even though rich beyond the dreams of all previous history. Thus the need is for community. The logic for achieving it, as we showed in Marcuse's observations on the 1844 Manuscripts, is dialectics.

CHAPTER V

Althusser's theory may be seen as an attempt to appeal to unimpeachable findings of a science of history capable of justifying the inevitability and necessity of specific party activities. The central notion of overdetermination arose from Althusser's attempt to provide a scientific rather than merely political justification for the Russian Revolution and for Stalin's ensuing crimes. Inevitably, after investigation, the various tools and categories of Althusser's science prove to be excessively metaphysical, incapable of scientific application.

If there has been any positive achievement from Althusser's lengthy theoretical project, it will be his unremitting attack on all positivistic theories that fail to take into account the fact of their each and own prior conditions of possibility and how these affect their directions of endeavor. However, this achievement can only be achieved and recognized full when it is wrested from the metaphysics of total determinism and becomes useful, instead of the sophisticated tool for manipulation that in Althusser's hands it becomes.

Althusser's solution to the problem of his own subconsciousness, from his own posing of the question, is left to depend on faith. The alleged scientificity of science and theoretical practice as its own criterion is nothing more nor less than recourse to non-criteria. Similarly, Paracelsus thought himself justified to burn the writings of

Galen because he had convinced himself that he'd found the philosopher's stone. Nonetheless he died prematurely, at the age of 48, his elixir vitae unable to save him from a horrible fate.

Althusser's attempted specification of the superstructure left out altogether the base and, in effect, collapsed Marxism into the superstructure, and into domination as inevitable and inescapable. In the presence of a party apparatus and the ideology it produces, total subservience to history becomes total subservience to its historical organ--the party. Althusser offers intellectuality without honouring intelligence, spontaneity without freedom, and socialism without creativity. What he does do is produce fetishized concepts that tend strongly to legitimate stable forms of domination.

In conclusion, we list some premisses, governing the future social change, that have emerged from our argument.

1. The logic of human understanding must be adequate to the laws of motion of reality for reality to be governed by human will.

2. The great unknown reality today is human society, people living together, the human social substance.

3. Because man understands through practice, by doing, to the extent that social reality is not consciously and collectively governed through social practice, social reality is not understood nor the human social substance yet affirmed.

4. How can man consciously live in society yet not understand or govern society (rather than men governing individuals): -- except that man's logic is atomistic rather than adequate to the ongoing social logic of reality.

5. To the extent that social reality operates 'behind the backs' of 'atomistic' individuals who are dependent upon society, it

is a force and a power unmastered and, we add, large forces unconsciously set in motion and undirected can be suicidal for those who unleashed it.

6. For man consciously to wield a larger power requires a growth in man's power, bringing his logic in line to the higher social logic.

7. For man consciously to wield the power to control his social existence as an evolution of liberty, rather than as totalitarian control of all members of society abolishing all liberty, this social practice: a) must be in response to a vital need; b) the fulfillment of this vital need must require the constant exercise of freedom.

8. To direct society is to consciously make social existence. For this construction to be positive rather than the dissolution of society, it requires making a "social" existence, i.e. fulfillment of the need for community as the new task for freedom.

9. For man to make society is ultimately to make himself in society, to make what was a heretofore unconscious communal existence into a form fulfilling the need for community. It is for a person to make of himself a communal being.

10. For this new practice to be an evolution of liberty, the transition from one practice to another must be a growth from the seeds of liberty inherent in existing logically atomistic ways of being, doing, and knowing.

11. Logic$^{1.(\text{Cartesian})}$ and Need$^{1.(\text{Commodities})}$ leads into Logic$^{2.(\text{Dialectics})}$ and Need$^{2.(\text{Community})}$ when, like the sailors of the flat world, their practical thought and activity carries them in a circle back to themselves, their point of departure.

12. The second last step in a circle of Cartesian steps, linking a.) the oppression against oneself, and b.) the cause of one's oppression both to oneself, is one's class membership, heretofore one's unconscious social existence. Marx's discovery: the proletariat is in both the base and the superstructure, in the old Cartesian consciousness as individuals and in the subconscious base as a class. In the period of class unconsciousness, one's class activity propels the structural laws upon which society turns. Once this is seen, then humanity is in a position to consciously direct the heretofore hidden laws of social evolution. To do so, it must abolish oppression and itself as a class. It will do so, and freely make society, by wielding consciously the dialectical logic that had previously governed the unconscious evolution of society.

In a further study, I hope to more precisely spell the connection between Cartesian forces and dialectical social forces as outlined in Marx's analysis of capitalism.

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